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The Shining Pyramid

By the same Author

The Hill of Dreams
The Secret Glory
Hieroglyphics
Far Off Things
Things Near and Far
The London Adventure
etc.

The Shining Pyramid

by

Arthur Machen

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INTRODUCTION

THE SHINING PYRAMID *is the result of a collaboration. Two years ago an American man-of-letters, full of industry, rummaged in old papers, magazines and manuscripts owing their origin to me, and produced as a result of his labours a volume published at Chicago, called "The Shining Pyramid." The American gentleman, I may say, did not disturb my peace by consulting me as to the content of the book in question. Then, in* 1924, *pleased, I suppose, with the result of his toils, he rummaged a little more, and, using the same methods, produced a second volume of scraps and odds and ends from my workshop. This book he entitled "The Glorious Mystery."*

At length I thought I ought to take a hand in the business. It seemed to me that I was leaving too much to the American collector of fragments. I went through the two volumes, and, rejecting a good deal, have made them into one.

The contents of THE SHINING PYRAMID *are various enough. They are of many periods and of many manners. There are wonder-stories, bits of the breakages of unhappy failures of books, a literary-historical essay of some length, and two articles from the old "Academy," one whimsical, the other venomous.*

"The Shining Pyramid" which gives the book its title, was written, if I remember, in 1895. *At that time my old friend, A. E. Waite, was editing a monthly magazine called "The Unknown World," about which I must tell an entertaining story. The firm which published "The Unknown World," amongst other things, was very largely supported*

financially by an English nobleman of ancient family, devoted to the occult arts. For one reason or another this support was at length withdrawn, and the publishing house found it necessary to suspend their business. There was, I believe, some difficulty in paying the rent due for the premises which they occupied. It was necessary to ask for a trifle of indulgence in this matter, and the firm wrote to this effect to their landlords, who occupied the lower part of the building.

Now at this point two odd circumstances met together. The landlords were, in fact, an Evangelical society of the strictest Protestant principles. That was one circumstance. The other was this: the firm wrote their letter begging for a slight delay on "Unknown World" letter paper, which displayed the magazine cover in miniature: a Pentacle of light, a strong Spirit proceeding from it, and, for all I remember, other apparatus of magic. And happy magic, indeed, resulted from this letter. The Evangelical society wrote in horror: they had never imagined that anything so dreadful was being done on their premises; they begged the publishers of "The Unknown World" not to speak of a trifle of rent owing, but to go forthwith in God's name. And the publishers went with happy hearts.

To "The Unknown World," then, "The Shining Pyramid" was contributed. Reading it over, for the first time for nearly thirty years, I exclaimed to the Critic on the Hearth: "This is highly ingenious rubbish." The Critic, very properly, admitted the ingenuity, but denied the rubbish. But I adhere to my criticism. And I am reminded of the logical rule

that A cannot be converted "simpliciter." I have always maintained, and I maintain still, that all the good books have been written for fun, because the author wanted to write them. Now I wrote "The Shining Pyramid" purely for fun, to amuse myself. But one cannot change "All good books are written for fun" into "All books written for fun are good."

"Out of the Earth" and "The Happy Children" belong to a far later period, to the sad days of the war. The former centres round a wonderful headland in Pembrokeshire, called Old Castle Head, a prehistoric fort overlooking the sea. The latter derives from a night and morning spent at Whitby. I am glad to say that the scrap of an imaginary Ritual contained in "The Happy Children" deceived a liturgiologist of some experience.

I have already written, in the body of the book, an essay by way of preface to "The Secret of the Sangraal." This has always been a question of the keenest interest to me since my friend, A. E. Waite, whom I have already mentioned, directed my closer attention to it many years ago. It has the fascination of an insoluble problem; and I am happy to believe that it will always remain insoluble. I need scarcely say that I am under no delusions as to my own share in the Quest. I hope that I have thrown some light on one side of that great Figure "which no man can comprehend," which appears under five several manners. It is something to have done so much. I am sorry for one thing. In these later days this most deeply interesting subject seems in some danger of falling under the purview of the occult quack. There is no sadder fate. I can bear much more easily the

THE SHINING PYRAMID

I

THE ARROW-HEAD CHARACTER

"HAUNTED, you said?"

"Yes, haunted. Don't you remember, when I saw you three years ago, you told me about your place in the west with the ancient woods hanging all about it, and the wild, domed hills, and the ragged land? It has always remained a sort of enchanted picture in my mind as I sit at my desk and hear the traffic rattling in the street in the midst of whirling London. But when did you come up?"

"The fact is, Dyson, I have only just got out of the train. I drove to the station early this morning and caught the 10.45."

"Well, I am very glad you looked in on me. How have you been getting on since we last met? There is no Mrs. Vaughan, I suppose?"

"No," said Vaughan, "I am still a hermit, like yourself. I have done nothing but loaf about."

Vaughan had lit his pipe and sat in the elbow chair, fidgeting and glancing about him in a somewhat dazed and restless manner. Dyson had wheeled round his chair when his visitor entered and

sat with one arm fondly reclining on the desk of his bureau, and touching the litter of manuscript.

"And you are still engaged in the old task?" said Vaughan, pointing to the pile of papers and the teeming pigeon-holes.

"Yes, the vain pursuit of literature, as idle as alchemy, and as entrancing. But you have come to town for some time I suppose; what shall we do to-night?"

"Well, I rather wanted you to try a few days with me down in the west. It would do you a lot of good, I'm sure."

"You are very kind, Vaughan, but London in September is hard to leave. Doré could not have designed anything more wonderful and mystic than Oxford Street as I saw it the other evening; the sunset flaming, the blue haze transmuting the plain street into a road 'far in the spiritual city.'"

"I should like you to come down though. You would enjoy roaming over our hills. Does this racket go on all day and all night? It quite bewilders me; I wonder how you can work through it. I am sure you would revel in the great peace of my old home among the woods."

Vaughan lit his pipe again, and looked anxiously at Dyson to see if his inducements had had any effect, but the man of letters shook his head, smiling, and vowed in his heart a firm allegiance to the streets.

"You cannot tempt me," he said.

"Well, you may be right. Perhaps, after all, I was wrong to speak of the peace of the country. There, when a tragedy does occur, it is like a stone

thrown into a pond ; the circles of disturbance keep on widening, and it seems as if the water would never be still again."

" Have you ever any tragedies where you are ? "

" I can hardly say that. But I was a good deal disturbed about a month ago by something that happened ; it may or may not have been a tragedy in the usual sense of the word."

" What was the occurrence ? "

" Well, the fact is a girl disappeared in a way which seems highly mysterious. Her parents, people of the name of Trevor, are well-to-do farmers, and their eldest daughter Annie was a sort of village beauty ; she was really remarkably handsome. One afternoon she thought she would go and see her aunt, a widow who farms her own land, and as the two houses are only about five or six miles apart, she started off, telling her parents she would take the short cut over the hills. She never got to her aunt's, and she never was seen again. That's putting it in a few words."

" What an extraordinary thing ! I suppose there are no disused mines, are there, on the hills ? I don't think you quite run to anything so formidable as a precipice ? "

" No ; the path the girl must have taken had no pitfalls of any description ; it is just a track over wild, bare hillside, far, even, from a byroad. One may walk for miles without meeting a soul, but it is all perfectly safe."

" And what do people say about it ? "

" Oh, they talk nonsense—among themselves. You have no notion as to how superstitious English

cottagers are in out-of-the-way parts like mine. They are as bad as the Irish, every whit, and even more secretive."

"But what do they say?"

"Oh, the poor girl is supposed to have 'gone with the fairies,' or to have been 'taken by the fairies.' Such stuff!" he went on, "one would laugh if it were not for the real tragedy of the case."

Dyson looked somewhat interested.

"Yes," he said, "'fairies' certainly strike a little curiously on the ear in these days. But what do the police say? I presume they do not accept the fairy-tale hypothesis?"

"No; but they seem quite at fault. What I am afraid of is that Annie Trevor must have fallen in with some scoundrels on her way. Castletown is a large seaport, you know, and some of the worst of the foreign sailors occasionally desert their ships and go on the tramp up and down the country. Not many years ago a Spanish sailor named Garcia murdered a whole family for the sake of plunder that was not worth sixpence. They are hardly human, some of these fellows, and I am dreadfully afraid the poor girl must have come to an awful end."

"But no foreign sailor was seen by anyone about the country?"

"No; there is certainly that; and of course country people are quick to notice anyone whose appearance and dress are a little out of the common. Still it seems as if my theory were the only possible explanation."

"There are no data to go upon," said Dyson,

thoughtfully. "There was no question of a love affair, or anything of the kind, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, not a hint of such a thing. I am sure if Annie were alive she would have contrived to let her mother know of her safety."

"No doubt, no doubt. Still it is barely possible that she is alive and yet unable to communicate with her friends. But all this must have disturbed you a good deal."

"Yes, it did; I hate a mystery, and especially a mystery which is probably the veil of horror. But frankly, Dyson, I want to make a clean breast of it; I did not come here to tell you all this."

"Of course not," said Dyson, a little surprised at Vaughan's uneasy manner. "You came to have a chat on more cheerful topics."

"No, I did not. What I have been telling you about happened a month ago, but something which seems likely to affect me more personally has taken place within the last few days, and to be quite plain, I came up to town with the idea that you might be able to help me. You recollect that curious case you spoke to me about at our last meeting; something about a spectacle-maker."

"Oh, yes, I remember that. I know I was quite proud of my acumen at the time; even to this day the police have no idea why those peculiar yellow spectacles were wanted. But, Vaughan, you really look quite put out; I hope there is nothing serious?"

"No, I think I have been exaggerating, and I want you to reassure me. But what has happened is very odd."

"And what has happened?"

"I am sure that you will laugh at me, but this is the story. You must know there is a path, a right of way, that goes through my land, and to be precise, close to the wall of the kitchen garden. It is not used by many people; a woodman now and again finds it useful, and five or six children who go to school in the village pass twice a day. Well, a few days ago I was taking a walk about the place before breakfast, and I happened to stop to fill my pipe just by the large doors in the garden wall. The wood, I must tell you, comes to within a few feet of the wall, and the track I spoke of runs right in the shadow of the trees. I thought the shelter from a brisk wind that was blowing rather pleasant, and I stood there smoking with my eyes on the ground. Then something caught my attention. Just under the wall, on the short grass, a number of small flints were arranged in a pattern; something like this": and Mr. Vaughan caught at a pencil and piece of paper, and dotted down a few strokes.

"You see," he went on, "there were, I should think, twelve little stones neatly arranged in lines, and spaced at equal distances, as I have shewn it on the paper. They were pointed stones, and the points were very carefully directed one way."

"Yes," said Dyson, without much interest, "no doubt the children you have mentioned had been playing there on their way from school. Children, as you know, are very fond of making such devices with oyster shells or flints or flowers, or with whatever comes in their way."

"So I thought; I just noticed these flints were

arranged in a sort of pattern and then went on. But the next morning I was taking the same round, which, as a matter of fact, is habitual with me, and again I saw at the same spot a device in flints. This time it was really a curious pattern ; something like the spokes of a wheel, all meeting at a common centre, and this centre formed by a device which looked like a bowl ; all, you understand, done in flints."

" You are right," said Dyson, " that seems odd enough. Still it is reasonable that your half-a-dozen school children are responsible for these fantasies in stone."

" Well, I thought I would set the matter at rest. The children pass the gate every evening at half-past five, and I walked by at six, and found the device just as I had left it in the morning. The next day I was up and about at a quarter to seven, and I found the whole thing had been changed. There was a pyramid outlined in flints upon the grass. The children I saw going by an hour and a half later, and they ran past the spot without glancing to right or left. In the evening I watched them going home, and this morning when I got to the gate at six o'clock there was a thing like a half moon waiting for me."

" So then the series runs thus : firstly ordered lines, then the device of the spokes and the bowl, then the pyramid, and finally, this morning, the half moon. That is the order, isn't it ? "

" Yes ; that is right. But do you know it has made me feel very uneasy ? I suppose it seems absurd, but I can't help thinking that some kind of

signalling is going on under my nose, and that sort of thing is disquieting."

"But what have you to dread? You have no enemies?"

"No; but I have some very valuable old plate."

"You are thinking of burglars then?" said Dyson, with an accent of considerable interest, "but you must know your neighbours. Are there any suspicious characters about?"

"Not that I am aware of. But you remember what I told you of the sailors."

"Can you trust your servants?"

"Oh, perfectly. The plate is preserved in a strong room; the butler, an old family servant, alone knows where the key is kept. There is nothing wrong there. Still, everybody is aware that I have a lot of old silver, and all country folks are given to gossip. In that way information may have got abroad in very undesirable quarters."

"Yes, but I confess there seems something a little unsatisfactory in the burglar theory. Who is signalling to whom? I cannot see my way to accepting such an explanation. What put the plate into your head in connection with these flint signs, or whatever one may call them?"

"It was the figure of the Bowl," said Vaughan. "I happen to possess a very large and very valuable Charles II punch-bowl. The chasing is really exquisite, and the thing is worth a lot of money. The sign I described to you was exactly the same shape as my punch-bowl."

"A queer coincidence certainly. But the other

figures or devices : you have nothing shaped like a pyramid ? "

" Ah, you will think that queerer. As it happens, this punch-bowl of mine, together with a set of rare old ladles, is kept in a mahogany chest of a pyramidal shape. The four sides slope upwards, the narrow towards the top."

" I confess all this interests me a good deal," said Dyson. " Let us go on then. What about the other figures ; how about the Army, as we may call the first sign, and the Crescent or Half-moon ? "

" Ah, there is no reference that I can make out of these two. Still, you see I have some excuse for curiosity at all events. I should be very vexed to lose any of the old plate ; nearly all the pieces have been in the family for generations. And I cannot get it out of my head that some scoundrels mean to rob me, and are communicating with one another every night."

" Frankly," said Dyson, " I can make nothing of it ; I am as much in the dark as yourself. Your theory seems certainly the only possible explanation, and yet the difficulties are immense."

He leaned back in his chair, and the two men faced each other, frowning, and perplexed by so bizarre a problem.

" By the way," said Dyson, after a long pause, " what is your geological formation down there ? "

Mr. Vaughan looked up, a good deal surprised by the question.

" Old red sandstone and limestone, I believe," he said. " We are just beyond the coal measures, you know."

"But surely there are no flints either in the sandstone or the limestone?"

"No, I never see any flints in the fields. I confess that did strike me as a little curious."

"I should think so! It is very important. By the way, what size were the flints used in making these devices?"

"I happen to have brought one with me; I took it this morning."

"From the Half-moon?"

"Exactly. Here it is."

He handed over a small flint, tapering to a point, and about three inches in length.

Dyson's face blazed up with excitement as he took the thing from Vaughan.

"Certainly," he said, after a moment's pause, "you have some curious neighbours in your country. I hardly think they can harbour any designs on your punch-bowl. Do you know this is a flint arrow-head of vast antiquity, and not only that, but an arrow-head of a unique kind? I have seen specimens from all parts of the world, but there are features about this thing that are quite peculiar."

He laid down his pipe, and took out a book from a drawer.

"We shall just have time to catch the 5.45 to Castletown," he said.

II

THE EYES ON THE WALL

Mr. Dyson drew in a long breath of the air of the hills and felt all the enchantment of the scene about him. It was very early morning, and he stood on the terrace in the front of the house. Vaughan's ancestor had built on the lower slope of a great hill, in the shelter of a deep and ancient wood that gathered on three sides about the house, and on the fourth side, the south-west, the land fell gently away and sank to the valley, where a brook wound in and out in mystic esses, and the dark and gleaming alders tracked the stream's course to the eye. On the terrace in that sheltered place no wind blew, and far beyond, the trees were still. Only one sound broke in upon the silence, and Dyson heard the noise of the brook singing far below, the song of clear and shining water rippling over the stones, whispering and murmuring as it sank to dark deep pools. Across the stream, just below the house, rose a grey stone bridge, vaulted and buttressed, a fragment of the Middle Ages, and then beyond the bridge the hills rose again, vast and rounded like bastions, covered here and there with dark woods and thickets of undergrowth, but the heights were all bare of trees, showing only grey turf and patches of bracken, touched here and there with the gold of fading fronds. Dyson looked to the north and south, and still he saw the wall of the hills, and the ancient woods, and the stream drawn in and out between them ; all grey and dim with

morning mist beneath a grey sky in a hushed and haunted air.

Mr. Vaughan's voice broke in upon the silence.

"I thought you would be too tired to be about so early," he said. "I see you are admiring the view. It is very pretty, isn't it, though I suppose old Meyrick Vaughan didn't think much about the scenery when he built the house. A queer grey, old place, isn't it?"

"Yes, and how it fits into the surroundings; it seems of a piece with the grey hills and the grey bridge below."

"I am afraid I have brought you down on false pretences, Dyson," said Vaughan, as they began to walk up and down the terrace. "I have been to the place, and there is not a sign of anything this morning."

"Ah, indeed. Well, suppose we go round together."

They walked across the lawn and went by a path through the ilex shrubbery to the back of the house. There Vaughan pointed out the track leading down to the valley and up to the heights above the wood, and presently they stood beneath the garden wall, by the door.

"Here, you see, it was," said Vaughan, pointing to a spot on the turf. "I was standing just where you are now that morning I first saw the flints."

"Yes, quite so. That morning it was the Army, as I call it; then the Bowl, then the Pyramid, and, yesterday, the Half-moon. What a queer old stone that is," he went on, pointing to a block of limestone rising out of the turf just beneath the wall.

"It looks like a sort of dwarf pillar, but I suppose it is natural."

"Oh, yes, I think so. I imagine it was brought here, though, as we stand on the red sandstone. No doubt it was used as a foundation stone for some older building."

"Very likely." Dyson was peering about him attentively, looking from the ground to the wall, and from the wall to the deep wood that hung almost over the garden and made the place dark even in the morning.

"Look here," said Dyson at length, "it is certainly a case of children this time. Look at that."

He was bending down and staring at the dull red surface of the mellowed bricks of the wall. Vaughan came up and looked hard where Dyson's finger was pointing, and could scarcely distinguish a faint mark in deeper red.

"What is it?" he said. "I can make nothing of it."

"Look a little more closely. Don't you see it is an attempt to draw the human eye?"

"Ah, now I see what you mean. My sight is not very sharp. Yes, so it is, it is meant for an eye, no doubt, as you say. I thought the children learnt drawing at school."

"Well, it is an odd eye enough. Do you notice the peculiar almond shape; almost like the eye of a Chinaman?"

Dyson looked meditatively at the work of the undeveloped artist, and scanned the wall again, going down on his knees in the minuteness of his inquisition.

"I should like very much," he said at length, "to know how a child in this out of the way place could have any idea of the shape of the Mongolian eye. You see the average child has a very distinct impression of the subject; he draws a circle, or something like a circle, and puts a dot in the centre. I don't think any child imagines that the eye is really made like that; it's just a convention of infantile art. But this almond-shaped thing puzzles me extremely. Perhaps it may be derived from a gilt Chinaman on a tea-canister in the grocer's shop. Still that's hardly likely."

"But why are you so sure it was done by a child?"

"Why! Look at the height. These old-fashioned bricks are little more than two inches thick; there are twenty courses from the ground to the sketch if we call it so; that gives a height of three and a half feet. Now, just imagine you are going to draw something on this wall. Exactly; your pencil, if you had one, would touch the wall somewhere on the level with your eyes, that is, more than five feet from the ground. It seems, therefore, a very simple deduction to conclude that this eye on the wall was drawn by a child about ten years old."

"Yes, I had not thought of that. Of course one of the children must have done it."

"I suppose so; and yet as I said, there is something singularly unchildlike about those two lines, and the eyeball itself, you see, is almost an oval. To my mind, the thing has an odd, ancient air; and a touch that is not altogether pleasant. I cannot

help fancying that if we could see a whole face from the same hand it would not be altogether agreeable. However, that is nonsense, after all, and we are not getting farther in our investigations. It is odd that the flint series has come to such an abrupt end."

The two men walked away towards the house, and as they went in at the porch there was a break in the grey sky, and a gleam of sunshine on the grey hill before them.

All the day Dyson prowled meditatively about the fields and woods surrounding the house. He was thoroughly and completely puzzled by the trivial circumstances he proposed to elucidate, and now he again took the flint arrow-head from his pocket, turning it over and examining it with deep attention. There was something about the thing that was altogether different from the specimens he had seen at the museums and private collections ; the shape was of a distinct type, and around the edge there was a line of little punctured dots, apparently a suggestion of ornament. Who, thought Dyson, could possess such things in so remote a place ; and who, possessing the flints, could have put them to the fantastic use of designing meaningless figures under Vaughan's garden wall ? The rank absurdity of the whole affair offended him unutterably ; and as one theory after another rose in his mind only to be rejected, he felt strongly tempted to take the next train back to town. He had seen the silver plate which Vaughan treasured, and had inspected the punch-bowl, the gem of the collection, with close attention ; and what he saw and his interview with the butler convinced him

that a plot to rob the strong box was out of the limits of enquiry. The chest in which the bowl was kept, a heavy piece of mahogany, evidently dating from the beginning of the century, was certainly strongly suggestive of a pyramid, and Dyson was at first inclined to the inept manœuvres of the detective, but a little sober thought convinced him of the impossibility of the burglary hypothesis, and he cast wildly about for something more satisfying. He asked Vaughan if there were any gypsies in the neighbourhood, and heard that the Romany had not been seen for years. This dashed him a good deal, as he knew the gypsy habit of leaving queer hieroglyphics on the line of march, and had been much elated when the thought occurred to him. He was facing Vaughan by the old-fashioned hearth when he put the question, and leaned back in his chair in disgust at the destruction of his theory.

"It is odd," said Vaughan, "but the gypsies never trouble us here. Now and then the farmers find traces of fires in the wildest part of the hills, but nobody seems to know who the fire-lighters are."

"Surely that looks like gypsies?"

"No, not in such places as those. Tinkers and gypsies and wanderers of all sorts stick to the roads and don't go very far from the farm-houses."

"Well, I can make nothing of it. I saw the children going by this afternoon, and, as you say, they ran straight on. So we shall have no more eyes on the wall at all events."

"No, I must waylay them one of these days and find out who is the artist."

The next morning when Vaughan strolled in his usual course from the lawn to the back of the house he found Dyson already awaiting him by the garden door, and evidently in a state of high excitement, for he beckoned furiously with his hand, and gesticulated violently.

"What is it?" asked Vaughan. "The flints again?"

"No; but look here, look at the wall. There; don't you see it?"

"There's another of those eyes!"

"Exactly. Drawn, you see, at a little distance from the first, almost on the same level, but slightly lower."

"What on earth is one to make of it? It couldn't have been done by the children; it wasn't there last night, and they won't pass for another hour. What can it mean?"

"I think the very devil is at the bottom of all this," said Dyson. "Of course, one cannot resist the conclusion that these infernal almond eyes are to be set down to the same agency as the devices in the arrow-heads; and where that conclusion is to lead us is more than I can tell. For my part, I have to put a strong check on my imagination, or it would run wild."

"Vaughan," he said, as they turned away from the wall, "has it struck you that there is one point—a very curious point—in common between the figures done in flints and the eyes drawn on the wall?"

"What is that?" asked Vaughan, on whose face there had fallen a certain shadow of indefinite dread.

"It is this. We know that the signs of the Army, the Bowl, the Pyramid, and the Half-moon must have been done at night. Presumably they were meant to be seen at night. Well, precisely the same reasoning applies to those eyes on the wall."

"I do not quite see your point."

"Oh, surely. The nights are dark just now, and have been very cloudy, I know, since I came down. Moreover, those overhanging trees would throw that wall into deep shadow even on a clear night."

"Well?"

"What struck me was this. What very peculiarly sharp eyesight, they, whoever 'they' are, must have to be able to arrange arrow-heads in intricate order in the blackest shadow of the wood, and then draw the eyes on the wall without a trace of bungling, or a false line."

"I have read of persons confined in dungeons for many years who have been able to see quite well in the dark," said Vaughan.

"Yes," said Dyson, "there was the abbé in *Monte Cristo*. But it is a singular point."

III

THE SEARCH FOR THE BOWL

"Who was that old man that touched his hat to you just now?" said Dyson, as they came to the bend of the lane near the house.

"Oh, that was old Trevor. He looks very broken, poor old fellow."

"Who is Trevor?"

"Don't you remember? I told you the story that afternoon I came to your rooms—about a girl named Annie Trevor, who disappeared in the most inexplicable manner about five weeks ago. That was her father."

"Yes, yes, I recollect now. To tell the truth I had forgotten all about it. And nothing has been heard of the girl?"

"Nothing whatever. The police are quite at fault."

"I am afraid I did not pay very much attention to the details you gave me. Which way did the girl go?"

"Her path would take her right across those wild hills above the house; the nearest point in the track must be about two miles from here."

"Is it near that little hamlet I saw yesterday?"

"You mean Croesyceiliog, where the children came from? No; it goes more to the north."

"Ah, I have never been that way."

They went into the house, and Dyson shut himself up in his room, sunk deep in doubtful thought, but yet with the shadow of a suspicion growing within him that for a while haunted his brain, all vague and fantastic, refusing to take definite form. He was sitting by the open window and looking out on the valley and saw, as if in a picture, the intricate winding of the brook, the grey bridge, and the vast hills rising beyond; all still and without a breath of wind to stir the mystic hanging woods, and the evening sunshine glowed warm on the bracken, and down below a faint mist, pure white, began to rise from the stream. Dyson

sat by the window as the day darkened and the huge bastioned hills loomed vast and vague, and the woods became dim and more shadowy ; and the fancy that had seized him no longer appeared altogether impossible. He passed the rest of the evening in a reverie, hardly hearing what Vaughan said ; and when he took his candle in the hall, he paused a moment before bidding his friend good-night.

"I want a good rest," he said. "I have got some work to do to-morrow."

"Some writing, you mean ?"

"No. I am going to look for the Bowl."

"The Bowl ! If you mean my punch-bowl, that is safe in the chest."

"I don't mean the punch-bowl. You may take my word for it that your plate has never been threatened. No ; I will not bother you with any suppositions. We shall in all probability have something much stronger than suppositions before long. Good-night, Vaughan."

The next morning Dyson set off after breakfast. He took the path by the garden-wall, and noted that there were now eight of the weird almond eyes dimly outlined on the brick.

"Six days more," he said to himself, but as he thought over the theory he had formed, he shrank, in spite of strong conviction, from such a wildly incredible fancy. He struck up through the dense shadows of the wood, and at length came out on the bare hillside, and climbed higher and higher over the slippery turf, keeping well to the north, and following the indications given him by Vaughan.

As he went on, he seemed to mount ever higher above the world of human life and customary things ; to his right he looked at a fringe of orchard and saw a faint blue smoke rising like a pillar ; there was the hamlet from which the children came to school, and there the only sign of life, for the woods embowered and concealed Vaughan's old grey house. As he reached what seemed the summit of the hill, he realised for the first time the desolate loneliness and strangeness of the land ; there was nothing but grey sky and grey hill, a high, vast plain that seemed to stretch on for ever and ever, and a faint glimpse of a blue-peaked mountain far away and to the north. At length he came to the path, a slight track scarcely noticeable, and from its position and by what Vaughan had told him he knew that it was the way the lost girl, Annie Trevor, must have taken. He followed the path on the bare hill-top, noticing the great limestone rocks that cropped out of the turf, grim and hideous, and of an aspect as forbidding as an idol of the South Seas ; and suddenly he halted, astonished, although he had found what he searched for. Almost without warning the ground shelved suddenly away on all sides, and Dyson looked down into a circular depression, which might well have been a Roman amphitheatre, and the ugly crags of limestone rimmed it round as if with a broken wall. Dyson walked round the hollow, and noted the position of the stones, and then turned on his way home.

"This," he thought to himself, "is more than curious. The Bowl is discovered, but where is the Pyramid ?"

"My dear Vaughan," he said, when he got back, "I may tell you that I have found the Bowl, and that is all I shall tell you for the present. We have six days of absolute inaction before us; there is really nothing to be done."

IV

THE SECRET OF THE PYRAMID

"I have just been round the garden," said Vaughan one morning. "I have been counting those infernal eyes, and I find there are fourteen of them. For heaven's sake, Dyson, tell me what the meaning of it all is."

"I should be very sorry to attempt to do so. I may have guessed this or that, but I always make it a principle to keep my guesses to myself. Besides, it is really not worth while anticipating events; you will remember my telling you that we had six days of inaction before us? Well, this is the sixth day, and the last of idleness. To-night I propose we take a stroll."

"A stroll! Is that all the action you mean to take?"

"Well, it may show you some very curious things. To be plain, I want you to start with me at nine o'clock this evening for the hills. We may have to be out all night, so you had better wrap up well, and bring some of that brandy."

"Is it a joke?" asked Vaughan, who was bewildered with strange events and strange surmises.

"No, I don't think there is much joke in it.

Unless I am much mistaken we shall find a very serious explanation of the puzzle. You will come with me, I am sure ? "

" Very good. Which way do you want to go ? "

" By the path you told me of ; the path Annie Trevor is supposed to have taken."

Vaughan looked white at the mention of the girl's name.

" I did not think you were on that track," he said. " I thought it was the affair of those devices in flint and of the eyes on the wall that you were engaged on. It's no good saying any more, but I will go with you."

At a quarter to nine that evening the two men set out, taking the path through the wood, and up the hill-side. It was a dark and heavy night, the sky was thick with clouds, and the valley full of mist, and all the way they seemed to walk in a world of shadow and gloom, hardly speaking, and afraid to break the haunted silence. They came out at last on the steep hill-side, and instead of the oppression of the wood there was the long, dim sweep of the turf, and higher, the fantastic limestone rocks hinted horror through the darkness, and the wind sighed as it passed across the mountain to the sea, and in its passage beat chill about their hearts. They seemed to walk on and on for hours, and the dim outline of the hill still stretched before them, and the haggard rocks still loomed through the darkness, when suddenly Dyson whispered, drawing his breath quickly, and coming close to his companion:

"Here," he said, "we will lie down. I do not think there is anything yet."

"I know the place," said Vaughan, after a moment. "I have often been by in the daytime. The country people are afraid to come here, I believe; it is supposed to be a fairies' castle, or something of the kind. But why on earth have we come here?"

"Speak a little lower," said Dyson. "It might not do us any good if we are overheard."

"Overheard here! There is not a soul within three miles of us."

"Possibly not; indeed, I should say certainly not. But there might be a body somewhat nearer."

"I don't understand you in the least," said Vaughan, whispering to humour Dyson, "but why have we come here?"

"Well, you see this hollow before us is the Bowl. I think we had better not talk even in whispers."

They lay full length upon the turf; the rock between their faces and the Bowl, and now and again, Dyson, slouching his dark, soft hat over his forehead, put out the glint of an eye, and in a moment drew back, not daring to take a prolonged view. Again he laid an ear to the ground and listened, and the hours went by, and the darkness seemed to blacken, and the faint sigh of the wind was the only sound.

Vaughan grew impatient with this heaviness of silence, this watching for indefinite terror; for to him there was no shape or form of apprehension, and he began to think the whole vigil a dreary farce.

"How much longer is this to last?" he whispered

to Dyson, and Dyson who had been holding his breath in the agony of attention put his mouth to Vaughan's ear and said :

" Will you listen ? " with pauses between each syllable, and in the voice with which the priest pronounces the awful words.

Vaughan caught the ground with his hands, and stretched forward, wondering what he was to hear. At first there was nothing, and then a low and gentle noise came very softly from the Bowl, a faint sound, almost indescribable, but as if one held the tongue against the roof of the mouth and expelled the breath. He listened eagerly and presently the noise grew louder, and became a strident and horrible hissing as if the pit beneath boiled with fervent heat, and Vaughan, unable to remain in suspense any longer, drew his cap half over his face in imitation of Dyson, and looked down to the hollow below.

It did, in truth, stir and seethe like an infernal caldron. The whole of the sides and bottom tossed and writhed with vague and restless forms that passed to and fro without the sound of feet, and gathered thick here and there and seemed to speak to one another in those tones of horrible sibilance, like the hissing of snakes, that he had heard. It was as if the sweet turf and the cleanly earth had suddenly become quickened with some foul writhing growth. Vaughan could not draw back his face, though he felt Dyson's finger touch him, but he peered into the quaking mass and saw faintly that there were things like faces and human limbs, and yet he felt his inmost soul chill with the sure

belief that no fellow soul or human thing stirred in all that tossing and hissing host. He looked aghast, choking back sobs of horror, and at length the loathsome forms gathered thickest about some vague object in the middle of the hollow, and the hissing of their speech grew more venomous, and he saw in the uncertain light the abominable limbs, vague and yet too plainly seen, writhe and intertwine, and he thought he heard, very faint, a low human moan striking through the noise of speech that was not of man. At his heart something seemed to whisper ever "the worm of corruption, the worm that dieth not," and grotesquely the image was pictured to his imagination of a piece of putrid offal stirring through and through with bloated and horrible creeping things. The writhing of the dusky limbs continued, they seemed clustered round the dark form in the middle of the hollow, and the sweat dripped and poured off Vaughan's forehead, and fell cold on his hand beneath his face.

Then, it seemed done in an instant, the loathsome mass melted and fell away to the sides of the Bowl, and for a moment Vaughan saw in the middle of the hollow the tossing of human arms. But a spark gleamed beneath, a fire kindled, and as the voice of a woman cried out loud in a shrill scream of utter anguish and terror, a great pyramid of flame spired up like a bursting of a pent fountain, and threw a blaze of light upon the whole mountain. In that instant Vaughan saw the myriads beneath ; the things made in the form of men but stunted like children hideously deformed, the faces with the

almond eyes burning with evil and unspeakable lusts ; the ghastly yellow of the mass of naked flesh ; and then as if by magic the place was empty, while the fire roared and crackled, and the flames shone abroad.

" You have seen the Pyramid," said Dyson in his ear, " the Pyramid of fire."

V

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

" Then you recognise the thing ? "

" Certainly. It is a brooch that Annie Trevor used to wear on Sundays ; I remember the pattern. But where did you find it ? You don't mean to say that you have discovered the girl ? "

" My dear Vaughan, I wonder you have not guessed where I found the brooch. You have not forgotten last night already ? "

" Dyson," said the other, speaking very seriously, " I have been turning it over in my mind this morning while you have been out. I have thought about what I saw, or perhaps I should say about what I thought I saw, and the only conclusion I can come to is this, that the thing won't bear recollection. As men live, I have lived soberly and honestly, in the fear of God, all my days, and all I can do is believe that I suffered from some monstrous delusion, from some phantasmagoria of the bewildered senses. You know we went home together in silence, not a word passed between us as to what I fancied I saw ; had we not better agree to keep silence on the subject ? When I took my walk in the peaceful

morning sunshine, I thought all the earth seemed full of praise, and passing by that wall I noticed there were no more signs recorded, and I blotted out those that remained. The mystery is over, and we can live quietly again. I think some poison has been working for the last few weeks ; I have trod on the verge of madness, but I am sane now."

Mr. Vaughan had spoken earnestly, and bent forward in his chair and glanced at Dyson with something of entreaty.

"My dear Vaughan," said the other, after a pause, "what's the use of this ? It is much too late to take that tone ; we have gone too deep. Besides you know as well as I that there is no delusion in the case ; I wish there were with all my heart. No, in justice to myself I must tell you the whole story, so far as I know it."

"Very good," said Vaughan with a sigh, "if you must, you must."

"Then," said Dyson, "we will begin with the end if you please. I found this brooch you have just identified in the place we have called the Bowl. There was a heap of grey ashes, as if a fire had been burning, indeed, the embers were still hot, and this brooch was lying on the ground, just outside the range of the flame. It must have dropped accidentally from the dress of the person who was wearing it. No, don't interrupt me ; we can pass now to the beginning, as we have had the end. Let us go back to that day you came to see me in my rooms in London. So far as I can remember, soon after you came in you mentioned, in a somewhat casual manner, that an unfortunate and mysterious

incident had occurred in your part of the country ; a girl named Annie Trevor had gone to see a relative, and had disappeared. I confess freely that what you said did not greatly interest me ; there are so many reasons which may make it extremely convenient for a man and more especially a woman to vanish from the circle of their relations and friends. I suppose, if we were to consult the police, one would find that in London somebody disappears mysteriously every other week, and the officers would, no doubt, shrug their shoulders, and tell you that by the law of averages it could not be otherwise. So I was very culpably careless to your story, and besides, there is another reason for my lack of interest ; your tale was inexplicable. You could only suggest a blackguard sailor on the tramp, but I discarded the explanation immediately. For many reasons, but chiefly because the occasional criminal, the amateur in brutal crime, is always found out, especially if he selects the country as the scene of his operations. You will remember the case of that Garcia you mentioned ; he strolled into a railway station the day after the murder, his trousers covered with blood, and the works of the Dutch clock, his loot, tied in a neat parcel. So rejecting this, your only suggestion, the whole tale became, as I say, inexplicable, and, therefore, profoundly uninteresting. Yes, *therefore*, it is a perfectly valid conclusion. Do you ever trouble your head about problems which you know to be insoluble ? Did you ever bestow much thought on the old puzzle of Achilles and the Tortoise ? Of course not, because you knew it was a hopeless quest, and so when you told me the story

of a country girl who had disappeared I simply placed the whole thing down in the category of the insoluble, and thought no more about the matter. I was mistaken, so it has turned out ; but if you remember, you immediately passed on to an affair which interested you more intensely, because personally. I need not go over the very singular narrative of the flint signs ; at first I thought it all trivial, probably some children's game, and if not that a hoax of some sort ; but your shewing me the arrow-head awoke my acute interest. Here, I saw, there was something widely removed from the commonplace, and matter of real curiosity ; and as soon as I came here I set to work to find the solution, repeating to myself again and again the signs you had described. First came the sign we have agreed to call the Army ; a number of serried lines of flints, all pointing in the same way. Then the lines, like the spokes of a wheel, all converging towards the figure of a Bowl, then the triangle or Pyramid, and last of all the Half-moon. I confess that I exhausted conjecture in my efforts to unveil this mystery, and as you will understand it was a duplex or rather triplex problem. For I had not merely to ask myself : what do these figures mean ? but also, who can possibly be responsible for the designing of them ? And again, who can possibly possess such valuable things, and knowing their value thus throw them down by the wayside ? This line of thought led me to suppose that the person or persons in question did not know the value of unique flint arrow-heads, and yet this did not lead me far, for a well-educated man might

easily be ignorant on such a subject. Then came the complication of the eye on the wall, and you remember that we could not avoid the conclusion that in the two cases the same agency was at work. The peculiar position of these eyes on the wall made me enquire if there was such a thing as a dwarf anywhere in the neighbourhood, but I found that there was not, and I knew that the children who pass by every day had nothing to do with the matter. Yet I felt convinced that whoever drew the eyes must be from three-and-a-half to four feet high, since, as I pointed out at the time, anyone who draws on a perpendicular surface chooses by instinct a spot about level with his face. Then again, there was the question of the peculiar shape of the eyes ; that marked Mongolian character of which the English countryman could have no conception, and for a final cause of confusion the obvious fact that the designer or designers must be able practically to see in the dark. As you remarked, a man who has been confined for many years in an extremely dark cell or dungeon might acquire that power ; but since the days of Edmond Dantès, where would such a prison be found in Europe ? A sailor, who had been immured for a considerable period in some horrible Chinese *oubliette*, seemed the individual I was in search of, and though it looked improbable, it was not absolutely impossible that a sailor or, let us say, a man employed on shipboard, should be a dwarf. But how to account for my imaginary sailor being in possession of prehistoric arrow-heads ? And the possession granted, what was the meaning and object of these mysterious signs of flint, and

the almond-shaped eyes? Your theory of a contemplated burglary I saw, nearly from the first, to be quite untenable, and I confess I was utterly at a loss for a working hypothesis. It was a mere accident which put me on the track; we passed poor old Trevor, and your mention of his name and of the disappearance of his daughter, recalled the story which I had forgotten, or which remained unheeded. Here, then, I said to myself, is another problem, uninteresting, it is true, by itself; but what if it prove to be in relation with all these enigmas which torture me? I shut myself in my room, and endeavoured to dismiss all prejudice from my mind, and I went over everything *de novo*, assuming for theory's sake that the disappearance of Annie Trevor had some connection with the flint signs and the eyes on the wall. This assumption did not lead me very far, and I was on the point of giving the whole problem up in despair, when a possible significance of the Bowl struck me. As you know there is a 'Devil's Punch-bowl' in Surrey, and I saw that the symbol might refer to some feature in the country. Putting the two extremes together, I determined to look for the Bowl near the path which the lost girl had taken, and you know how I found it. I interpreted the sign by what I knew, and read the first, the Army, thus: 'there is to be a gathering or assembly at the Bowl in a fortnight (that is the Half-moon) to see the Pyramid, or to build the Pyramid.' The eyes, drawn one by one, day by day, evidently checked off the days, and I knew that there would be fourteen and no more. Thus far the way seemed pretty plain; I would not

trouble myself to enquire as to the nature of the assembly, or as to who was to assemble in the loneliest and most dreaded place among these lonely hills. In Ireland or China or the west of America the question would have been easily answered ; a muster of the disaffected, the meeting of a secret society, Vigilantes summoned to report : the thing would be simplicity itself ; but in this quiet corner of England, inhabited by quiet folk, no such suppositions were possible for a moment. But I knew that I should have an opportunity of seeing and watching the assembly, and I did not care to perplex myself with hopeless research ; and in place of reasoning a wild fancy entered into judgment : I remembered what people had said about Annie Trevor's disappearance, that she had been 'taken by the fairies.' I tell you, Vaughan, I am a sane man as you are, my brain is not, I trust, mere vacant space to let to any wild improbability, and I tried my best to thrust the fantasy away. And the hint came of the old name of fairies, 'the little people,' and the very probable belief that they represent a tradition of the prehistoric Turanian inhabitants of the country, who were cave dwellers : and then I realised with a shock that I was looking for a being under four feet in height, accustomed to live in darkness, possessing stone instruments, and familiar with the Mongolian cast of features ! I say this, Vaughan, that I should be ashamed to hint at such visionary stuff to you, if it were not for that which you saw with your very eyes last night, and I say that I might doubt the evidence of my senses, if they were not confirmed by yours. But you and I cannot

look each other in the face and pretend delusion ; as you lay on the turf beside me I felt your flesh shrink and quiver, and I saw your eyes in the light of the flame. And so I tell you without any shame what was in my mind last night as we went through the wood and climbed the hill, and lay hidden beneath the rock.

"There was one thing that should have been most evident that puzzled me to the very last. I told you how I read the sign of the Pyramid ; the assembly was to see a pyramid, and the true meaning of the symbol escaped me to the last moment. The old derivation from πυρ, fire, though false, should have set me on the track, but it never occurred to me.

"I think I need say very little more. You know we were quite helpless, even if we had foreseen what was to come. Ah, the particular place where these signs were displayed ? Yes, that is a curious question. But this house is, so far as I can judge, in a pretty central situation amongst the hills ; and possibly, who can say yes or no, that queer, old limestone pillar by your garden wall was a place of meeting before the Celt set foot in Britain. But there is one thing I must add : I don't regret our inability to rescue the wretched girl. You saw the appearance of those things that gathered thick and writhed in the Bowl ; you may be sure that what lay bound in the midst of them was no longer fit for earth."

"So ?" said Vaughan.

"So she passed in the Pyramid of Fire," said Dyson, "and they passed again to the under-world, to the places beneath the hills."

OUT OF THE EARTH

THERE was some sort of confused complaint during last August of the ill-behaviour of the children at certain Welsh watering-places. Such reports and vague rumours are most difficult to trace to their heads and fountains ; none has better reason to know that than myself. I need not go over the old ground here, but I am afraid that many people are wishing by this time that they had never heard my name ; again, a considerable number of estimable persons are concerning themselves gloomily enough, from my point of view, with my everlasting welfare. They write me letters, some in kindly remonstrance, begging me not to deprive poor, sick-hearted souls of what little comfort they possess amidst their sorrows. Others send me tracts and pink leaflets with allusions to "the daughter of a well-known canon" ; others again are violently and anonymously abusive. And then in open print, in fair book-form, Mr. Begbie has dealt with me righteously but harshly, as I cannot but think.

Yet, it was all so entirely innocent, nay casual, on my part. A poor linnet of prose, I did but perform my indifferent piping in the *Evening News* because I wanted to do so, because I felt that the story of "The Bowmen" ought to be told. An

inventor of fantasies is a poor creature, heaven knows, when all the world is at war ; but I thought that no harm would be done, at any rate, if I bore witness, after the fashion of the fantastic craft, to my belief in the heroic glory of the English host who went back from Mons fighting and triumphing.

And then, somehow or other, it was as if I had touched a button and set in action a terrific, complicated mechanism of rumours that pretended to be sworn truth, of gossip that posed as evidence, of wild tarradiddles that good men most firmly believed. The supposed testimony of that " daughter of a well-known canon " took parish magazines by storm, and equally enjoyed the faith of dissenting divines. The " daughter " denied all knowledge of the matter, but people still quoted her supposed sure word ; and the issues were confused with tales, probably true, of painful hallucinations and deliriums of our retreating soldiers, men fatigued and shattered to the very verge of death. It all became worse than the Russian myths, and as in the fable of the Russians, it seemed impossible to follow the streams of delusion to their fountain-head—or heads. Who was it who said that " Miss M. knew two officers who, etc., etc." ? I suppose we shall never know his lying, deluding name.

And so, I dare say, it will be with this strange affair of the troublesome children of the Welsh seaside town, or rather of a group of small towns and villages lying within a certain section or zone, which I am not going to indicate more precisely than I can help, since I love that country, and my recent experiences with " The Bowmen "

have taught me that no tale is too idle to be believed. And, of course, to begin with, nobody knew how this odd and malicious piece of gossip originated. So far as I know, it was more akin to the Russian myth than to the tale of "The Angels of Mons." That is, rumour preceded print; the thing was talked of here and there and passed from letter to letter long before the papers were aware of its existence. And—here it resembles rather the Mons affair—London and Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham were muttering vague unpleasant things while the little villages concerned basked innocently in the sunshine of an unusual prosperity.

In this last circumstance, as some believe, is to be sought the root of the whole matter. It is well known that certain East Coast towns suffered from the dread of air-raids, and that a good many of their usual visitors went westward for the first time. So there is a theory that the East Coast was mean enough to circulate reports against the West Coast out of pure malice and envy. It may be so; I do not pretend to know. But here is a personal experience, such as it is, which illustrated the way in which the rumour was circulated. I was lunching one day at my Fleet Street tavern—this was early in July—and a friend of mine, a solicitor, of Serjeants' Inn, came in and sat at the same table. We began to talk of holidays and my friend Eddis asked me where I was going. "To the same old place," I said. "Manavon. You know we always go there." "Are you really?" said the lawyer; "I thought that coast had gone off a lot. My wife has a friend who's heard that it's not at all that it was."

I was astonished to hear this, not seeing how a little village like Manavon could have "gone off." I had known it for ten years as having accommodation for about twenty visitors, and I could not believe that rows of lodging houses had sprung up since the August of 1914. Still I put the question to Eddis: "Trippers?" I asked, knowing firstly that trippers hate the solitudes of the country and the sea; secondly, that there are no industrial towns within cheap and easy distance, and thirdly, that the railways were issuing no excursion tickets during the war.

"No, not exactly trippers," the lawyer replied. "But my wife's friend knows a clergyman who says that the beach at Tremaen is not at all pleasant now, and Tremaen's only a few miles from Manavon, isn't it?"

"In what way not pleasant?" I carried on my examination. "Pierrots and shows, and that sort of thing?" I felt that it could not be so, for the solemn rocks of Tremaen would have turned the liveliest Pierrot to stone. He would have frozen into a crag on the beach, and the seagulls would carry away his song and make it a lament by lonely, booming caverns that look on Avalon. Eddis said he had heard nothing about showmen; but he understood that since the war the children of the whole district had got quite out of hand.

"Bad language, you know," he said, "and all that sort of thing, worse than London slum children. One doesn't want one's wife and children to hear foul talk at any time, much less on their holiday.

And they say that Castell Coch is quite impossible ; no decent woman would be seen there ! "

I said : " Really, that's a great pity," and changed the subject. But I could not make it out at all. I knew Castell Coch well—a little bay bastioned by dunes and red sandstone cliffs, rich with greenery. A stream of cold water runs down there to the sea ; there is the ruined Norman Castle, the ancient church and the scattered village ; it is altogether a place of peace and quiet and great beauty. The people there, children and grown-ups alike, were not merely decent but courteous folk : if one thanked a child for opening a gate, there would come the inevitable response : " And welcome kindly, sir." I could not make it out at all. I didn't believe the lawyer's tales ; for the life of me I could not see what he could be driving at. And, for the avoidance of all unnecessary mystery, I may as well say that my wife and child and myself went down to Manavon last August and had a most delightful holiday. At the time we were certainly conscious of no annoyance or unpleasantness of any kind. Afterwards, I confess, I heard a story that puzzled and still puzzles me, and this story, if it be received, might give its own interpretation to one or two circumstances which seemed in themselves quite insignificant.

But all through July I came upon traces of evil rumours affecting this most gracious corner of the earth. Some of these rumours were repetitions of Eddis's gossip ; others amplified his vague story and made it more definite. Of course, no first-hand evidence was available. There never is any

first-hand evidence in these cases. But A knew B who had heard from C that her second-cousin's little girl had been set upon and beaten by a pack of young Welsh savages. Then people quoted "a doctor in large practice in a well-known town in the Midlands," to the effect that Tremaen was a sink of juvenile depravity. They said that a responsible medical man's evidence was final and convincing ; but they didn't bother to find out who the doctor was, or whether there was any doctor at all—or any doctor relevant to the issue. Then the thing began to get into the papers in a sort of oblique, by-the-way sort of manner. People cited the case of these imaginary bad children in support of their educational views. One side said that "these unfortunate little ones" would have been quite well-behaved if they had had no education at all ; the opposition declared that continuation schools would speedily reform them and make them into admirable citizens. Then the poor Arfonshire children seemed to become involved in quarrels about Welsh Disestablishment and in the question of the miners ; and all the while they were going about behaving politely and admirably as they always do behave. I knew all the time that it was all nonsense, but I couldn't understand in the least what it meant, or who was pulling the wires of rumour, or their purpose in so pulling. I began to wonder whether the pressure and anxiety and suspense of a terrible war had unhinged the public mind, so that it was ready to believe any fable, to debate the reasons for happenings which had never happened. At last, quite incredible things began to

be whispered : visitors' children had not only been beaten, they had been tortured ; a little boy had been found impaled on a stake in a lonely field near Manavon ; another child had been lured to destruction over the cliffs at Castell Coch. A London paper sent a good man down quietly to Arfon to investigate. He was away for a week, and at the end of that period returned to his office and in his own phrase, "threw the whole story down." There was not a word of truth, he said, in any of these rumours ; no vestige of a foundation for the mildest forms of all this gossip. He had never seen such a beautiful country ; he had never met pleasanter men, women or children ; there was not a single case of anyone having been annoyed or troubled in any sort or fashion.

Yet all the while the story grew, and grew more monstrous and incredible. I was too much occupied in watching the progress of my own mythological monster to pay much attention. The Town Clerk of Tremaen, to which the legend had at length penetrated, wrote a brief letter to the Press indignantly denying that there was the slightest foundation for "the unsavoury rumours" which, he understood, were being circulated ; and about this time we went down to Manavon and, as I say, enjoyed ourselves extremely. The weather was perfect : blues of paradise in the skies, the seas all a shimmering wonder, olive greens and emeralds, rich purples, glassy sapphires changing by the rocks ; far away a haze of magic lights and colours at the meeting of sea and sky. Work and anxiety had harried me ; I found nothing better than to rest on

the thymy banks by the shore, finding an infinite balm and refreshment in the great sea before me, in the tiny flowers beside me. Or we would rest all the summer afternoon on a "shelf" high on the grey cliffs and watch the tide creaming and surging about the rocks, and listen to it booming in the hollows and caverns below. Afterwards, as I say, there were one or two things that struck cold. But at the time those were nothing. You see a man in an odd white hat pass by and think little or nothing about it. Afterwards, when you hear that a man wearing just such a hat had committed murder in the next street five minutes before, then you find in that hat a certain interest and significance. "Funny children," was the phrase my little boy used; and I began to think they were "funny" indeed.

If there be a key at all to this queer business, I think it is to be found in a talk I had not long ago with a friend of mine named Morgan. He is a Welshman and a dreamer, and some people say he is like a child who has grown up and yet has not grown up like other children of men. Though I did not know it, while I was at Manavon, he was spending his holiday time at Castell Coch. He was a lonely man and he liked lonely places, and when we met in the autumn he told me how, day after day, he would carry his bread and cheese and beer in a basket to a remote headland on that coast known as the Old Camp. Here, far above the waters, are solemn, mighty walls, turf-grown; circumvallations rounded and smooth with the passing of many thousand years. At one end of this most ancient place there is a tumulus, a tower of observation,

perhaps, and underneath it slinks the green, deceiving ditch that seems to wind into the heart of the camp, but in reality rushes down to sheer rock and a precipice over the waters.

Here came Morgan daily, as he said, to dream of Avalon, to purge himself from the fuming corruption of the streets.

And so, as he told me, it was with singular horror that one afternoon as he dozed and dreamed and opened his eyes now and again to watch the miracle and magic of the sea, as he listened to the myriad murmurs of the waves, his meditation was broken by a sudden burst of horrible raucous cries —and the cries of children, too, but children of the lowest type. Morgan says that the very tones made him shudder—"They were to the ear what slime is to the touch," and then the words: every foulness, every filthy abomination of speech; blasphemies that struck like blows at the sky, that sank down into the pure, shining depths, defiling them! He was amazed. He peered over the green wall of the fort, and there in the ditch he saw a swarm of noisome children, horrible little stunted creatures with old men's faces, with bloated faces, with little sunken eyes, with leering eyes. It was worse than uncovering a brood of snakes or a nest of worms.

No; he would not describe what they were about. "Read about Belgium," said Morgan, "and think they couldn't have been more than five or six years old." There was no infamy, he said, that they did not perpetrate; they spared no horror of cruelty. "I saw blood running in streams, as they

shrieked with laughter, but I could not find the mark of it on the grass afterwards."

Morgan said he watched them and could not utter a word ; it was as if a hand held his mouth tight. But at last he found his voice and shrieked at them, and they burst into a yell of obscene laughter and shrieked back at him, and scattered out of sight. He could not trace them ; he supposes that they hid in the deep bracken behind the Old Camp.

"Sometimes I can't understand my landlord at Castell Coch," Morgan went on. "He's the village postmaster and has a little farm of his own—a decent, pleasant, ordinary sort of chap. But now and again he will talk oddly. I was telling him about these beastly children and wondering who they could be when he broke into Welsh, something like 'the battle that is for age unto ages ; and the People take delight in it.'"

So far Morgan, and it was evident that he did not understand at all. But this strange tale of his brought back an odd circumstance or two that I recollected : a matter of our little boy straying away more than once, and getting lost among the sand dunes and coming back screaming, evidently frightened horribly, and babbling about "funny children." We took no notice ; did not trouble, I think, to look whether there were any children wandering about the dunes or not. We were accustomed to his small imaginations.

But after hearing Morgan's story I was interested and I wrote an account of the matter to my friend, old Doctor Duthoit, of Hereford. And he :

"They were only visible, only audible to children and the childlike. Hence the explanation of what puzzled you at first; the rumours, how did they arise? They arose from nursery gossip, from scraps and odds and ends of half-articulate children's talk of horrors that they didn't understand, of words that shamed their nurses and their mothers.

"These little people of the earth rise up and rejoice in these times of ours. For they are glad, as the Welshman said, when they know that men follow their ways."

The Happy Children

THE HAPPY CHILDREN

A DAY after the Christmas of 1915, my professional duties took me up North; or to be as precise as our present conventions allow, to "the North-Eastern district." There was some singular talk; mad gossip of the Germans having a "dug-out" somewhere by Malton Head. Nobody seemed to be quite clear as to what they were doing there or what they hoped to do there; but the report ran like wildfire from one foolish mouth to another, and it was thought desirable that the whole silly tale should be tracked down to its source and exposed or denied once and for all.

I went up, then, to that North-Eastern district on Sunday, December 26th, 1915, and pursued my investigations from Helmsdale Bay, which is a small watering-place within a couple of miles of Malton Head. The people of the dales and the moors had just heard of the fable, I found, and regarded it all with supreme and sour contempt. So far as I could make out, it originated from the games of some children who had stayed at Helmsdale Bay in the summer. They had acted a rude drama of German spies and their capture, and had used Helby Cavern, between Helmsdale and Malton Head, as the scene of their play. That was all; the fools apparently

had done the rest ; the fools who believed with all their hearts in " the Russians," and got cross with anyone who expressed a doubt as to " the Angels of Mons."

" Gang oop to beasten and tell them sike a tale and they'll not believe it," said one dalesman to me ; and I have a suspicion that he thought that I, who had come so many hundred miles to investigate the story, was but little wiser than those who credited it. He could not be expected to understand that a journalist has two offices—to proclaim the truth and to denounce the lie.

I had finished with " the Germans " and their dug-out early in the afternoon of Monday, and I decided to break the journey home at Banwick, which I had often heard of as a beautiful and curious old place. So I took the one-thirty train, and went wandering inland, and stopped at many unknown stations in the midst of great levels, and changed at Marishes Ambo, and went on again through a strange land in the dimness of the winter afternoon. Somehow the train left the level and glided down into a deep and narrow dell, dark with winter woods, brown with withered bracken, solemn in its loneliness. The only thing that moved was the swift and rushing stream that foamed over the boulders and then lay still in brown pools under the bank.

The dark woods scattered and thinned into groups of stunted, ancient thorns ; great grey rocks, strangely shaped, rose out of the ground ; crenellated rocks rose on the heights on either side. The brooklet swelled and became a river, and always

following this river we came to Banwick soon after the setting of the sun.

I saw the wonder of the town in the light of the afterglow that was red in the west. The clouds blossomed into rose-gardens ; there were seas of fairy green that swam about isles of crimson light ; there were clouds like spears of flame, like dragons of fire. And under the mingling lights and colours of such a sky Banwick went down to the pools of its land-locked harbour and climbed again across the bridge towards the ruined abbey and the great church on the hill.

I came from the station by an ancient street, winding and narrow, with cavernous closes and yards opening from it on either side, and flights of uneven steps going upward to high terraced houses, or downward to the harbour and the incoming tide. I saw there many gabled houses, sunken with age far beneath the level of the pavement, with dipping roof-trees and bowed doorways, with traces of grotesque carving on their walls. And when I stood on the quay, there on the other side of the harbour was the most amazing confusion of red-tiled roofs that I had ever seen, and the great grey Norman church high on the bare hill above them ; and below them the boats swinging in the swaying tide, and the water burning in the fires of the sunset. It was the town of a magic dream. I stood on the quay till the shining had gone from the sky and the water-pools, and the winter night came down dark upon Banwick.

I found an old snug inn just by the harbour, where I had been standing. The walls of the

rooms met each other at odd and unexpected angles ; there were strange projections and juttings of masonry, as if one room were trying to force its way into another ; there were indications as of unthinkable staircases in the corners of the ceilings. But there was a bar where Tom Smart would have loved to sit, with a roaring fire and snug, old elbow chairs about it and pleasant indications that if "something warm" were wanted after supper it could be generously supplied.

I sat in this pleasant place for an hour or two and talked to the pleasant people of the town who came in and out. They told me of the old adventures and industries of the town. It had once been, they said, a great whaling port, and then there had been a lot of shipbuilding, and later Banwick had been famous for its amber-cutting. "And now there's nowt," said one of the men in the bar ; "but we get on none so badly."

I went out for a stroll before my supper. Banwick was now black, in thick darkness. For good reasons not a single lamp was lighted in the streets, hardly a gleam showed from behind the closely-curtained windows. It was as if one walked a town of the Middle Ages, and with the ancient overhanging shapes of the houses dimly visible I was reminded of those strange, cavernous pictures of mediæval Paris and Tours that Doré drew.

Hardly anyone was abroad in the streets ; but all the courts and alleys seemed alive with children. I could just see little white forms fluttering to and fro as they ran in and out. And I never heard such happy children's voices. Some were singing, some

were laughing ; and peering into one black cavern, I made out a ring of children dancing round and round and chanting in clear voices a wonderful melody ; some old tune of local tradition, as I supposed, for its modulations were such as I had never heard before.

I went back to my tavern and spoke to the landlord about the number of children who were playing about the dark streets and courts, and how delightfully happy they all seemed to be.

He looked at me steadily for a moment, and then said :

" Well, you see, sir, the children have got a bit out of hand of late ; their fathers are out at the front, and their mothers can't keep them in order. So they're running a bit wild."

There was something odd about his manner. I could not make out exactly what the oddity was, or what it meant. I could see that my remark had somehow made him uncomfortable ; but I was at a loss to know what I had done. I had my supper, and then sat down for a couple of hours to settle " the Germans " of Malton Head.

I finished my account of the German myth, and instead of going to bed, I determined that I would have one more look at Banwick in its wonderful darkness. So I went out and crossed the bridge, and began to climb up the street on the other side, where there was that strange huddle of red roofs mounting one above the other that I had seen in the afterglow. And to my amazement I found that these extraordinary Banwick children were still about and abroad, still revelling and carolling,

dancing and singing, standing, as I supposed, on the top of the flights of steps that climbed from the courts up the hillside, and so having the appearance of floating in mid-air. And their happy laughter rang out like bells on the night.

It was a quarter-past eleven when I had left my inn, and I was just thinking that the Banwick mothers had indeed allowed indulgence to go too far, when the children began again to sing that old melody that I had heard in the evening. And now the sweet, clear voices swelled out into the night, and, I thought, must be numbered by hundreds. I was standing in a dark alley-way, and I saw with amazement that the children were passing me in a long procession that wound up the hill towards the abbey. Whether a faint moon now rose, or whether clouds passed from before the stars, I do not know ; but the air lightened, and I could see the children plainly as they went by singing, with the rapture and exultation of them that sing in the woods in springtime.

They were all in white, but some of them had strange marks upon them which, I supposed, were of significance in this fragment of some traditional mystery-play that I was beholding. Many of them had wreaths of dripping seaweed about their brows ; one showed a painted scar on her throat ; a tiny boy held open his white robe, and pointed to a dreadful wound above his heart, from which the blood seemed to flow ; another child held out his hands wide apart and the palms looked torn and bleeding, as if they had been pierced. One of the children held up a little baby in her arms, and even

the infant showed the appearance of a wound on its face.

The procession passed me by, and I heard it still singing as if in the sky as it went on its steep way up the hill to the ancient church. I went back to my inn, and as I crossed the bridge it suddenly struck me that this was the eve of the Holy Innocents'. No doubt I had seen a confused relic of some mediæval observance, and when I got back to the inn I asked the landlord about it.

Then I understood the meaning of the strange expression I had seen on the man's face. He was sick and shuddering with terror ; he drew away from me as though I were a messenger from the dead.

* * * *

Some weeks after this I was reading in a book called *The Ancient Rites of Banwick*. It was written in the reign of Queen Elizabeth by some anonymous person who had seen the glory of the old abbey, and then the desolation that had come to it. I found this passage :

" And on Childermas Day, at midnight, there was done there a marvellous solemn service. For when the monks had ended their singing of Te Deum at their Mattins, there came unto the altar the lord abbot, gloriously arrayed in a vestment of cloth of gold, so that it was a great marvel to behold him. And there came also into the church all the children that were of tender years of Banwick, and they were all clothed in white robes. And then began the lord abbot to sing the Mass of the Holy Innocents And when the sacring of the Mass was ended, then

there came up from the church into the quire the youngest child that there was present that might hold himself aright. And this child was borne up to the high altar, and the lord abbot set the little child upon a golden and glistering throne afore the high altar, and bowed down and worshipped him, singing, 'Talium Regnum Coelorum, Alleluya. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Alleluya,' and all the quire answered singing, 'Amicti sunt stolis albis, Alleluya, Alleluya; They are clad in white robes, Alleluya, Alleluya.' And then the prior and all the monks in their order did like worship and reverence to the little child that was upon the throne."

* * * *

I had seen the White Order of the Innocents. I had seen those who came singing from the deep waters that are about the *Lusitania;* I had seen the innocent martyrs of the fields of Flanders and France rejoicing as they went up to hear their Mass in the spiritual place.

[*The following essays on the matter of the Holy Graal were written in* 1907. *On its being proposed that they should be reprinted, I had thoughts of rewriting them; but I have changed my mind. In the first place, I am a bad hand at the new handling of old work; if I try to do so I find that the article, or the story, or whatever it may be, has, as it were, set; and is not to be made again into the likeness of anything recognisable. Secondly, I am not aware that any new light has been shed upon the mystery of the Sangraal. I have read Miss Jessie L. Weston's "From Ritual to Romance," and have admired both its learning and its ingenuity. But Miss Weston has failed to convince me that the Graal Legend rests on the two bases of a fertility cultus and of a secret Gnostic sect which persisted in Wales up to the Conquest. As to the Gnostic sect; that, I think, is clearly a dream and a fable; there is no evidence of the existence of anything of the kind; and the hint given by Miss Weston that she has secret information from initiates is almost conclusive—to those who know anything about occultists. It is a melancholy thing: but a Dolorous Enchantment is laid upon these unfortunate persons, and the effect of this Enchantment is that they are seldom able to speak the truth.*

The Fertility motive is not quite so simple. Let us grant, if you will, that the question of fertility, which is the question of life, both for ourselves and for our cabbages, is behind everything. If we go far back enough, it is clear that we can do nothing in this world if we are so unlucky as to be dead; and this applies equally to the phallic hypothesis of the origin of everything, which can be worked in very well with the fertility hypothesis. Sometimes there seems a conflict between the two, and on this point see

Miss Harrison's treatment of the affair of the Maypole. Formerly — even as early as the unscientific age of Prynne the Puritan—the maypole was nothing more or less than a phallus, a gross symbol of the reproductive forces of nature. But Miss Harrison denies this. The maypole, she declares, was not an imitation phallus, but an imitation tree; it was originally hung with green boughs, and its signification was an appeal to the real trees in the wood to put out their leaves once more. Just as the sailor imitates the wind that he desires by whistling for it, so, says Miss Harrison, did the countrymen imitate the trees in the wood by making a mock tree, called a Maypole.

Now, supposing we choose to believe the one theory of the maypole or the other; or even both at once: what light shall we gain as to the actual emotions and intent of the seventeenth or sixteenth century people who danced about the maypole? I venture to say, none whatever. They were not moved at all by either consideration. They were not invoking the reproductive forces of nature by rearing up the image of the phallus. They were not addressing any invocation to the woods or to anything else. They were being jolly, or merry, at a certain time of the year in a traditional manner. For all I know, our learned people may decide that the game of marbles was originally a reminder to the spheres to keep on rolling. If I am told so, I shall not deny the doctrine, but I shall maintain that the boys who handle their alley tors and commoneys on London pavements know nothing of it. Granted this hypothetical origin of marbles; it has nothing whatever to do with the game of the twentieth entury as played by Bob and Bill in Southwark or Hornsey. So, dancing may have been in the first place an imitation of anything you like, an invocation

of whatever you please, animal, vegetable, or mineral. But such considerations are wholly out of account if we are writing on the minuet or the gavotte ; the fox-trot or the jazz. To put the same thing in a different way ; if I call a friend—behind his back, of course—an imbecile, I am not thinking of a weak, old man tottering with a stick, but, very likely, of a strong young man swaggering without one.

Or, to put the same thing in a different way again : the stimulation of fertility, animal or vegetable, has nothing in the world to do with the Graal romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and its connection, if any, with the legends from which the romances sprang is of the same nature as that which exists between "imbecile" and "in baculo."

In a word, I have read nothing in the books of the Fertility people which inclines me to modify or retract anything which I wrote on the Graal seventeen years ago.

And there is one last reason, a slight one, which has induced me to leave these notes as I find them. They open with a topical allusion to a tale which was current in 1907. *I think it might be called the first of the foolish tales of Glastonbury. There have been many since, but in those days Brother Johannes had not forgotten his mother English and learned the speech of Wardour Street. The silly tale in question was to the effect that the Holy Graal had been found in a well or stream near Glastonbury, and in the first of these articles following I tell the story as it appeared in a newspaper. As will be seen, the paper, acting no doubt on information received, said that a British Museum expert had pronounced in favour of the antiquity of the supposed sacred vessel. I do not know*

whether this were the case, but I do know that soon afterwards an undoubted authority—I think the President of the Society of Antiquaries—declared that the supposed Graal was a modern forgery.

But the whole story was an odd one, indeed. It is a grief to me that I have forgotten many of the details, but in broad outline it was something like this. A gentleman is travelling in Southern France, and in the window of a curiosity shop he sees an object which attracts him strangely. It is a saucer-shaped vessel of blue glass, shot with silver. He goes into the shop, buys the object, and when he is back in England, shows it to his father, who is at once deeply interested and agitated. "This is most important," he is supposed to have said. "During my lifetime I must have charge of it, but when I die, it will come to you." I am not sure whether the tale represented the older man as adding: "This is the Holy Graal," or merely: "This is exactly what I conceive the Holy Graal to have been."

Well, in due course of time the Blue Saucer descended from father to son. I do not know how long it had been in his possession before a voice or a vision or a sense of the fitness of things bade him place the vessel in a well or stream of Glastonbury. And I have forgotten, if I ever knew, how long it lay in the said waters, before voices or dreams or visions came to two young ladies of Bristol city and told them all about it. At all events they retrieved the object, and took it back with them to Bristol. It went on journeys then; it inhabited, for a while, a safe in a city office. And then, it would appear, it made a stay in the library of some great London house. Dom Adrian Gasquet was making some researches in this library at the time and was guided by the saucer,

dropped, it seemed, somewhat unceremoniously behind the books on one of the shelves, to a volume, before unheard of, which solved all the difficulties of the thousand years dispute between the Eastern and Western churches. This fact I learnt from a document drawn up by a distinguished occultist; the very initiate who, a few years later, told a friend that the Germans who fell during the retreat from Mons were found to be full of arrows—shot, I suppose, by my own faithful Bowmen.

Somehow or other the "Graal" found its way back to Bristol, where it was housed in a befitting shrine. Here it reconsidered matters in the light of modern advanced thought. It became liberal in its views and, naturally, strictly undenominational. Its standpoint approximated, so far as I can remember, to that of Brother Johannes, whom I have mentioned already, and it gave oracles on many topics, not being limited by the bounds of a narrow ecclesiasticism. After all, they didn't know everything down in Caerleon or Camelot—or Judee. I heard of one of these oracles, from a friend of mine, who was then a teacher of singing. There was a concert at Bristol, and my friend was in the artists' room with a lady, a pupil of his. He heard from the platform the strains of a violin playing a very indifferent modern composition.

"Why on earth do they play that rubbish?" he asked, with some appearance of contempt.

"Oh, didn't you know?" replied the lady, shocked and awed also. "That piece has been ordered to be played by the Holy Graal."

It must be fifteen years since I heard this history, and that was the last news that came to me of the Graal of Glastonbury and Bristol. Possibly it no longer

manifests so openly; possibly it has been taken away and hidden in some secret place—say, in another curiosity shop. But I think the story was worth preserving. I have said elsewhere that I am quite sure that an invitation to witness the "Feeding of the Dragons: Morning Dress" at Hampton Court would be pretty widely accepted.

There are two points which I should like to emphasise. It has been said by the upholders of the "pagan" theory of the Graal legend that certain processions and pageants in some of the romances can have no possible relation to Christian sacramentalism. This is true. These circumstances have no relation whatever to Christian sacramentalism. They come from the (doubtless) pre-Christian tale of Peredur or Percival; the Exile, Return and Vengeance story. They are presented before Percival to remind him of the wrong that has been done his house, and to incite him to take vengeance on the wrongdoers. I have endeavoured to explain in the course of these notes how the two perfectly distinct stories were drawn together into one. The mediæval romance writer believed, above all things, in combining his materials; and his materials were, more or less, anything and everything that came to his hand. A bit here from a missionary legend, a bit there from a folktale, a scrap from an apocryphal gospel, a reflection of the war between the Roman and the Celtic churches, a fragment of Welsh Hagiology, a notion gathered from the Lays of Marie de France, a "high" doctrine of transubstantiation, "traces" of Bardic teaching, as much fighting as you please derived from the Gestes and human nature, the courtly story of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere; these are some of the materials which the writer of

Graal romances, 1170–1220, *had in his mind as he sat at his desk. But, as I must repeat once more, while he revolved many things, there were two thoughts that were absent even from his nightmares: the thought of the stimulation of fertility, animal and vegetable; and the thought of the sect of Gnostic initiates who survived in Britain, almost into his own age. And if he had found himself thinking of the Spear and Chalice as sexual symbols, I believe he would have poisoned himself on the spot.*

Then, another point: the case of the wounded, or maimed, or stricken King, who is the keeper of the Graal. It may almost be said that each romance has a different explanation of the King's condition. The confusion seems hopeless, the problem before the modern critic impossible of solution. But in the first place, one fact emerges: that since each romance writer gives a different reason for the Graal King's disablement it seems pretty clear that there was no reason to give; no reason, that is, in the legendary materials from which he drew his tale. One thing only was clear to the writer's mind: that the King, the Lord of the Graal Castle, the keeper of the Holy Mysteries, the entertainer of the questing knights was himself sorely stricken, unhealed by the Vessel of healing which he kept. Why? The authors of the romances did not know in the least, and so each one invented an explanation, the best he could think of. And it is my belief that the solution of this puzzle of the wounded King is to be found in the story of Bran, as told in the Mabinogion. In this story Bran is a British king who goes over to war in Ireland. He was remarkable in this, that he was so tall that no house could hold him. In fighting he is wounded by an enemy spear in his foot. Thereupon he calls his

companions, the heroes, about him, and strangely commands that they cut off his head, and bear it to a certain castle or palace, promising that the head will give them as rich entertainment as ever he himself had done—so long as they forbear to open the door that looks on Cornwall. This accordingly was done; and for many years the heroes were enchanted by the Entertainment of the Venerable Head. They lived, as it were, in the state of Paradise, feasting and rejoicing, and listening to the singing of the Three Fairy Birds of Rhiannon, whose voices sounded close at hand and yet echoed as if they came from beyond the waves of ocean. The end will be guessed: one of the heroes at last opened the door that looked on Cornwall and Paradise was lost for ever.

And here, I believe, we have the origin of the Graal King, Keeper of the Holy Things, Keeper of Paradise itself; and yet himself maimed, smitten, unhealed. And the odd thing is that a most curious parallel to the tale of Bran is to be found in the folk-lore of the Indians of North America. Mark Twain—of all people!—quotes it at length in his "Life on the Mississippi." In the Red Indian story the primary fault was the neglect of a girl to observe a certain ceremony of puberty, whereon it became necessary that the head of her brother should be cut off, lest ruin should come upon the world. But, this severed head, exactly in the fashion of the Venerable Head of Bran Vendigeid, becomes ruler and administrator, guide and protector of the household.

It is barely possible that the Indian folk-lore has been "corrupted" by Welsh missionaries. But this appears very unlikely, especially on consideration of the nature of the Indian story. And so, perhaps, the story of the Venerable Head is one of the oldest stories

in the world. It went through its changes in Britain : the Fatal Wound remained, but the Head was no longer seen, save in one very notable passage in the Grand Saint Graal. The story was baptised, just as the demigod Bran became an early Christian saint in the estimation of uncritical Welshmen ; and so in the end this strange figure and symbol of an infinite past becomes the mysterious Wounded King, the Lord of the Castle of the Graal.]

THE SECRET OF THE SANGRAAL

IT is really rather refreshing. "Scare heads" are presumably inevitable; in the pleasing language of their inventors they seem to have "come to stay." Well; if we *must* have them it is much better to be confronted with:

MYSTERY OF A RELIC

Finder Believes It to Be the Holy Graal

Two "Visions" Discovered at Glastonbury

than with an array of trumpet-toned capitals which tell us the King is going to meet the Kaiser at Marienbad. And the story told is quite a curious one. A saucer-shaped vessel, made of bluish-green glass into which silver leaf had been introduced, was found in a well at Glastonbury. The newspaper accounts leave its genuineness an open question; but we are informed that a British Museum expert who has seen the vessel pronounces in favour of its antiquity, and considers it to be of Phœnician workmanship. So goes the history of the matter; there is also a legend.

The legend is more difficult. It is an affair of spiritual voices, of visions declaring the vessel to be the cup used by our Lord at the Last Supper that

He made, of seeresses who describe the object without seeing it, of dreams in which a woman appears holding the vessel in her hands, of a strange radiance which is diffused from this (possibly) Holy Relic.

But there are some curious points in the tale, apart from its super-normal ingredients. In the first place the newspaper reporters speak of the vessel as a cup. It is not a cup ; it is a saucer ; and therefore it is idle to speak of it as the chalice of the Last Supper. In the second place, the discoverers, who say it is the Holy Graal, once the great relic of Glastonbury Abbey, are apparently ignorant of the fact that Glastonbury never claimed the possession of any such object. William of Malmesbury, who wrote the Glastonbury Legend in the first half of the twelfth century, says that the body of Joseph of Arimathæa was buried somewhere in the abbey precinct, and that with his body there were two phials of the Precious Blood ; the idea may have been suggested to Gul. Marisburiensis by the fact that a phial said to contain the Precious Blood had just been brought to Bruges. But so far as we are aware the monks of Glastonbury who "discovered" the body of King Arthur in the reign of Henry II. never "discovered" the body of St. Joseph or the phials.

Then, again, there is the consideration that, with one exception, the Romances insist on the final withdrawal of the Graal either into a vague region of mystery, or as in the great Galahad Quest, first to Sarras and finally to heaven. The one exception is Wolfram's "Parzival," where the Graal is left at

Montsalvatch guarded by the "Templesiens"; but the followers of Wolfram, pressed probably by the universal tradition, bore away the Graal at last to the realm of Prester John. Of course, there is the question of what the word really means. Paulin Paris thought it came from "Grail Book" (Mass Book); as a matter of fact the Gradual was called the Grail in the Middle Ages, and according to Ducange a Grail Service meant a morning service or mass. But more modern scholarship derives the word from a conjectured form, *cratella*, a diminutive of *crater*, and the word seems to have implied to the twelfth-century mind a sort of shallow dessert-dish standing on a stem or foot. Now there is neither foot nor stem to the vessel just "discovered" at Glastonbury; and yet it is odd enough that a sculptured stone at Nigg in Scotland depicts two Celtic priests bowing in adoration before something which resembles a saucer on a stem, over which hovers a dove bearing a Host in its beak. In this connection it must be remembered that the Graal was a vague object to the romance writers; in the "High History," for example, the object assumes five different forms, the last of which is a chalice.

There is a very short and easy way of dealing with the legend. Somehow or other you get hold of a theory, make up your mind that it is true, and then manipulate the evidence. The simplest way is to select the particular romance which fits in best with the theory that you have acquired; and then you ignore all the other romances which may conflict with it more or less. The best instance of this method is Dr. Sebastian Evans' ingenious and

attractive *In Quest of the Holy Graal.* Dr. Evans, it must be said, was the accomplished and admirable, if somewhat archaistic translator of one of the Romances, to which he gave the title *The High History of the Holy Graal*, and on this particular romance he founded his theory. It is an attractive one, as I have said ; but it is quite terrible !

There is a very odd and inexplicable incident in most versions of the legend. Logres, that is Britain, is supposed to be in the doleful condition of enchantment ; physically and spiritually the land languishes, and the keeper of the Graal is sick of a mystic wound. All that is required is for the chosen knight of the adventure to come to the Graal Castle ; and then the holy vessel is borne before him as he sits in the hall. He must then ask what the Graal is and whom it serves ; whereupon the evil enchantments will be annulled, the sick keeper will be healed, and all that is broken will be made whole. For one reason or another the knight does not ask this question on his first visit ; consequently the doleful state of Britain continues and the wounded keeper of the mysteries is unhealed. It should be mentioned that the keeper is sometimes called the King Fisherman, sometimes the Rich Fisher ; and this title, be it noted, is not the smallest of the many difficulties in this extraordinary tale.

Well ; Dr. Sebastian Evans knew what all this meant. I should first mention that in the particular romance which he selected Logres is not " enchanted " on the arrival of Percival at the Graal Castle ; misfortunes fall upon the land afterwards, in consequence of Percival's unhappy failure to put the

question to the keeper. Here again is another illustration of the difficulties which beset the Graal student—the romances disagree with one another on the most important points. But Dr. Evans' interpretation of the whole legend is, briefly, as follows. It is, he says, an allegory of the events which fell out in England in the reign of King John, when the realm was laid under an interdict by the Holy Father. Percival, the hero of the quest, is St. Dominic ; King Fisherman is the Pope, the King of Castle Mortal (or Deadly Castle) is the Emperor. Sir Gawain is Fulke the Troubadour, Lancelot is the elder Simon de Montfort, and Galahad is St. Francis of Assisi. The silence of Percival mean that St. Dominic omitted to ask the Holy Father a certain question. The circumstances were these : Dominic was conferring with the Pope on the Albigenses, with special reference to the question of the exemption from interdict enjoyed by the Cistercian Order. But he never thought of discussing the question of interdict and Cistercian exemption in any other country besides Languedoc ; and so when England was laid under interdict, the Cistercians were not allowed to say mass—and this was the dolorous enchantment of the Isle of Britain.

This is the crudest outline of Dr. Sebastian Evans' theory ; and it must be said that it is worked out in his book with the greatest ingenuity and the nicest skill, and that some of the analogies between the history of the time and the " High History " are quite extraordinary. They are so extraordinary that I am almost tempted to believe that they were expressly contrived by the Great Enemy of Literary

Students—a very malevolent devil he—that Dr. Evans might be led to adopt a theory which is, undoubtedly, quite preposterous.

It would be a tedious and long task to demonstrate the vanity of the Evans' theory; I hope its evident falsity will become apparent in the course of this note. But it may be said, by the way, that there is one fatal and manifest flaw which vitiates the whole argument, and that is that the Graal legend is the Legend of a Great Loss. The Graal in the "High History" is finally taken away into the unseen, in the "Queste" it is removed to heaven; another romance ends with the statement that it was henceforth seen of none "so openly," and the tales which carry on the legend of Montsalvatch remove the sacred thing to the realms of Prester John. But, in actual history, the interdict was removed and mass was once more freely celebrated; the discrepancy is quite fatal. And from another point of view: is it credible that a Cistercian, writing *c.* 1220 in Norman French, would ever dream of "getting up" obscure Celtic legends and details of Welsh folk-lore with the idea of giving his ecclesiastico-political allegory a picturesque setting? Or yet again: I am "a man in the street," I am sorry to say, as to the precise dates of the manuscripts, but I believe the learned are tolerably well agreed that some of the Graal Romances at all events were written years before the English interdict was heard of.

I have gone so far with Dr. Sebastian Evans' theory because it is the most ingenious of all the "straightforward" explanations of the Graal story.

There are many other writers who are quite as certain, and not nearly so interesting. There is the "pagan" school, which regards the whole story as a bit of pre-Christian Celtic folk-lore, into which "Christian fetichism" was crudely and pitiably introduced in the twelfth century; there is the frankly nonsensical "Sun Myth" theory, according to which Galahad and Merlin are "sun heroes." This latter explanation has now gone the way of all such rubbish; but I daresay it has been succeeded by the equally ridiculous "Covent Garden theory," and for all I know Galahad may now be explained in certain quarters as *Caulahad*, or Cabbage Hero. Then there is the notion that the Graal Romances are, somehow or other, a Templar manifesto, the veiled utterance of the "secret doctrine" of the poor fellow soldiers of Christ. Here again we may say: how account for the introduction of obscure Welsh names, for the mention of obscure Celtic customs in books which are supposed to represent the teachings of a cosmopolitan order of chivalry with its headquarters in the East? But the most decisive answer to this hypothesis is: that in the first place there is no earthly reason to suppose that the Templars had any secret doctrine, or, if we are to believe one or two very dubious charges made against them, their doctrine was distinctly anti-sacramental. And the doctrine of the Great Romances is, on the other hand, hyper-sacramental. It would be just as reasonable to declare that Ultramontanism originated in the bosom of the Wee Kirk; but people *will* talk nonsense about the Templars. Then there is somebody who says that

water was a symbol of purity, truth, wisdom, and salvation, and so the vessel which contained water became a symbol of these great things. It is fine ; but as it happens the Graal did not contain water. There are other and still wilder theories, most of them devoid of the mere semblance of reason.

It seems likely that these attempts at explanation are so far from being satisfactory, because they attempt a task which is in the nature of things impossible. If you are asked to explain the Graal legend you are really being asked a dozen questions, not one single question ; and the attempt to reply to all these interrogatories with a single answer is bound to end in failure. And, again ; it is always a mistake to say that X *is* A when you know in your heart that you should have remarked that : " There is a good deal to be said in favour of the statement that X is A " or even " There is a bare possibility that X is A." But it seems so weak to content oneself with such timid affirmations as these after a course of long and wearisome research ; and so the bolder way is followed, and the truth is obscured. I want to say at the outset that I am content to be weak ; what I *know* about the Graal is very little, but I have a vision of certain probabilities, some quite strong and some rather doubtful.

It is my opinion, then, that the Legend of the Graal, as it may be collected from the various Romances, is the glorified version of early Celtic Sacramental Legends, which legends had been married to certain elements of pre-Christian myth and folk-lore. I say legends, not legend, because it seems highly improbable that the numerous and

important differences between the various romances could have arisen, if there had been one recognised legend, one *Textus Receptus* of the story. And the legend as we know it is a glorified version ; it was the work of an age that knew how to transmute Norman architecture into the marvellous beauty of First Pointed, or Early English. I should think that this process in architecture, which we know did take place, offers a pretty fair analogy to the transmutation of scattered Celtic legends into the splendid and glorious history of Galahad and the Sangraal. Only, unfortunately, while we can point to tangible and mighty evidence in stone of the one process, we have only very fragmentary proofs of the other.

But I think we can say for certain that at least one X *is* A—that the origins of the Graal are certainly Celtic. Otherwise one would have to conceive the Anglo-Norman romance writer as "mugging up" Celtic literature, learning Welsh, wandering over Glamorganshire and Caermarthenshire in search of obscure names on tombstones, which names he would presently carefully distort into a French form, making himself acquainted with the unending genealogies of the Welsh saints and heroes. He would, for instance, have discovered with some pains the name Avalloch in early Welsh pedigrees, and then have made it into Evelake, and have smiled at the result. He would have visited St. Dogmael's, inspected the Bilingual Ogham Stone with the inscription *Sagramni maqui Cunatemi*, and have gone on his way rejoicing, conscious that "Sir Sagramour" in his forthcoming romance would

be both melodious and entirely correct. I do not think that this was the way in which romances were written in the twelfth century ; though a twentieth-century story-teller might well use some such methods. In the same way the " High History " has the following passage :

" The history witnesseth us that in the land of King Arthur at this time there was not a single chalice. The Graal appeared at the sacring of the mass in five several manners that none ought not to tell, for the secret things of the sacrament ought none to tell openly but he to whom God hath given it."

The history goes on to say that the last of the forms assumed by the Graal was that of a chalice, and that from the pattern seen in the mystery King Arthur caused chalices to be made for the churches of Britain, a " brief " having been found under the corporal declaring that God's will was that in such a vessel should His Body be sacrificed. Now in the " Leabar Breac " (written *c.* 1097, but evidently following very ancient tradition) we hear that under the rule of Columcille or Columba there was a mass chalice in every church. It is difficult to determine the exact force of these allusions, but Miss Evelyn Underhill (Mrs. Stuart Moore), a very weighty authority in such matters, has afforded a possible explanation. She suggests that there was a strong Egyptian influence in Celtic Christendom, and points out that the hermits of the Egyptian desert showed a strong tendency to become Catholic Quakers ; that is, to live solely the life of contemplation, without the use of the sacraments. Hence

the command of St. Columba in fact, and the command of King Arthur in the romance. This is, of course, a conjecture, but it seems to me a brilliant one. But I cannot imagine anything more profoundly uninteresting than an attempt to show that there is no connection between the passage in the "High History" and the passage in the "Leabar Breac." Again, it is known, I suppose, even to those who know but very little of Celtic things, that every saint of Britain and Scotland and Ireland had his holy bell—many examples of these bells still remain in wonderful preservation, some of them still retaining the reputation of miraculous powers—and in the chapter of the "High History" which has been cited the holy bell is almost of as much importance as the Graal itself. It was one of those that had been cast by King Solomon, one for God, one for Our Lady, and one for the honour of the saints. King Arthur thought that he had heard this bell ringing all the way of his journey from Cardoil to the Graal Castle, and he commanded that bells should be made after the pattern of it. It is distinctly *not* conceivable that such details as these should be inserted to give an archaic and Celtic atmosphere to a twelfth-century tale; we are forced to conclude that the French or Anglo-French Romance writers were working on old Celtic materials; the people who say that the Normans made up the whole story out of their heads are clearly out of court.

So far good: but now comes the difficulty: what did these Celtic materials amount to? Here knowledge ceases, and opinions, more or less probable,

begin. But in the first place it would be well to be clear on one point : Percival was *not* the original Graal knight ; though the first book (now existent) which utters the great word Graal is the Conte del Graal of Chrestien de Troyes, of which Percival is the hero. It seems certain that Percival was not the hero of the old Legend, because the " Peredur " of the Mabinogion, a late form of the Legend from which Chrestien doubtless derived his " Conte," has no mention of the Graal at all : and such is the case with the English metrical legends of Percival. Peredur (or Percival), is, as Mr. Nutt has pointed out, an Exile, Return, and Vengeance story, doubtless pre-Christian. Chrestien was engaged in turning the tale into French verse, hears some vague rumours of the Graal Legend, and mentions the Graal, so vaguely that it seems doubtful whether he knew what a Graal was. Wolfram von Eschenbach, who followed Chrestien, says, truly enough, that he had not got the right story ; the appearance of the Graal is a mere dubious incident introduced without much reason into the tale of Percival. One can see, perhaps, what made Chrestien think of it ; in the Mabinogion mention is made of a salver in which a man's head swims in blood ; it was the head of Peredur's cousin slain by the sorceresses of Gloucester ; it was the reminder to Peredur that he must execute vengeance on these sorceresses. But a dish full of blood might well remind Chrestien of another strange story that he had heard of a miraculous vessel ; and so he, tentatively, introduces the Graal into his romance, into a tale of a quite distinct origin and meaning. Chrestien, then, does

not count : but he coupled the name of Percival with the Graal Legend, and so we find later writers, such as the authors of the " High History " and the " Parzival," adopting Percival as the Graal hero.

It is undoubtedly futile to make the story of the Sangraal a purely pagan legend, into which Christian Symbolism intruded at a late period. It is futile—to take one reason out of many—because the story of the Sangraal is essentially and chiefly a high, mystic, sacramental, and Christian legend : take away its Christianity and it is merely a queer bit of folk-lore. The Gargantua has, of course, folk-lore elements or traces, perhaps in the proportion of .0001 to the thousand, but the book does not owe its value or its interest to the old farmhouse tales about a giant. It is pretty much the same case with the Graal histories. There are, undoubtedly, pre-Christian elements in the mythos ; the " feeding properties " of the Blessed Vessel are, perhaps, the most distinct of these, and carry one back to the Bardic Cauldrons, to the *mwys* of Gwyddno Garanhir, who, it may be noted, derived his revenue from a salmon-weir, and may have thus counted for something in the invention of the title " Rich Fisherman." These were miraculous feeding-vessels—illustrations of a conception which is, perhaps, worldwide, which is certainly not peculiar to Celtdom, since there is a mill which will give a perpetual supply of flour in the Kalevala. And one sees that these cauldrons of eternal refection could well be married to the instrument of the *dulcissimi convivii*, for there are numerous authorities which might be cited in favour of the belief that the

Eucharist feeds not only the soul but the body. And on the other hand, the pagan cauldron was not wholly physical : it would not "cook the food of a coward." We can see, I think, without much difficulty that the Cauldron of Ceridwen might well be fused with the Chalice of the Eucharist ; and we may allow that certain properties of the Sangraal were suggested by the basket of Gwyddno Garanhir, the horn of Bran Galed, the cauldron at Tyrnog, and pan and platter of Padarn Beisrudd and other such food-and-drink-multiplying rarities of the isle of Britain.

And there is another point in which pre-Christian legend may have had an influence ; that is the "quest motive." Arthur ventured into the depths of the underworld in search of magic treasures, and here, I think, we have the origin of the search for the Graal, which I do not believe formed part of the sacramental legend in its earliest form. This was a legend of vanishing and of loss, not of finding ; the two motives have been combined with wonderful skill in the "Queste," where Galahad achieves the Graal, discovers the holy and thaumaturgic object after many perils ; and yet in the end Galahad dies and the Graal is borne up to heaven. And I really think that when we have admitted these traces we have given all the credit that can justly be given to the pagan elements in the story. And even in the matter of the quest idea which is decidedly most important ; I am not sure that we have a purely pre-Christian motive. The wanderings of the Celtic monks may count for a good deal ; it is wonderful to think that the

typical adventure of the mediæval knight-errant—the leaping into a boat without oars or sails, trusting utterly to the deep and the design of God, was, one might almost say, part of the ordinary routine of the average Celtic monk.

It is curious to note the final manifestation of the boat without oar or sails. It descended from the Celtic monks and hermits to the Arthurian knights, and from them it came down to the fantastic "literary" knights of the Spanish romances of chivalry. And from these it passed to one who is, in a sense, the most glorious of all knights—though he is also the móst glorious of all jokes. When Don Quixote discussed the matter of chivalry with the Curate and the Barber in the first chapter of the Second Part, he spoke thus :

> "No one now, issuing from the wood, penetrates yonder mountains, and then treads the barren, lonely shore of the sea—mostly a tempestuous and stormy one—and finding on the beach a little bark without oars, sail, mast, or tackling of any kind, in the intrepidity of his heart flings himself into it and commits himself to the wrathful billows of the deep sea . . . and finds himself, when he least expects it, three thousand leagues and more from the place where he embarked."

So much for the theory ; and when it came to practice, the Knight was not found wanting. As Don Quixote and his Squire were riding by the banks of the Ebro, they discovered a small boat, without oars or any other gear, that lay at the water's

edge, tied to the stem of a tree growing on the bank. Don Quixote at once dismounted and ordered Sancho to dismount. Sancho, a notoriously obtuse man, failed to draw the obvious inference and asked why. Whereupon the Knight answered :

> "Thou must know, Sancho, that this bark here is plainly, and without the possibility of any alternative, calling and inviting me to enter it, and in it to go to give aid to some knight or other person in need of it, who is no doubt in some sore strait ; for this is the way of the books of chivalry and of the enchanters who figure and speak in them."

And, in sober fact, even so late as the reign of King Alfred such a boat, with three monks in it, drifted on to the coast of Cornwall from some "cell" on the shores of Ireland, and when the Northmen came to Iceland they found there a population of such adventurers. Celtic "monk-errantry" is a strange matter ; one does not know how far these voyages were the expression of missionary zeal, how far they were due to the desire for a greater solitude than might be had in the cell, for the "desart in ocean" that St. Columba's monk tried to discover, or how far they were really voyages to the semi-pagan, semi-Christian paradise, deep Avalon of the apple-blossoms far beyond the waves, the Glassy Isle where, some say, Merlin is hidden, having with him the Thirteen Rarities of Britain. In these voyages, undoubtedly, we have the origins of all that is most poetic and most romantic in the romances of chivalry ; and the journeys of the Celtic monks

may well have had some share in the Quests of the Knights of the Graal.

There is another possible element which must be examined and estimated for. Though Dr. Sebastian Evans is undoubtedly wrong in his main thesis, I should like to think that there is "something" n another theory of his. Dr. Evans holds the view that Geoffrey of Monmouth's curious book was written to order, written to further certain ambitions of the House of Anjou, which dreamed of a British Empire and a British Church—the latter independent of the Roman Curia. Geoffrey wrote of the glories of the British kings, and these glories, according to Dr. Evans, were to be taken over by the Normans, as the legitimate successors of King Arthur. One wonders whether this were so ; if so it would explain certain things which are at present hard to understand ; it would explain, for example, how men dared to set up Josephes, an imaginary son of St. Joseph of Arimathæa, as a rival to St. Peter—as infinitely superior to St. Peter. Christ himself, according to one of the Romances, makes Josephes bishop, styling him the Moses of the New Covenant. Was Josephes intended to be the legendary founder of a British Christianity, not merely independent of, but infinitely more exalted than the Christianity of St. Peter and his successors the Popes ? This is a question on which more light is needed ; but if it were established it would certainly do something to explain the odd air of contemporary allusion which some of the Romances possess.

II

The evidence for the Celtic and Sacramental origins of the Graal legend is to be found, directly, in the lives of the Welsh saints, especially in the life of St. David. Indirectly, it may be gathered from many works which treat of early British Christianity.

Now, before we began to trace certain analogies between our legend and the ecclesiastical histories, it will be as well to say a word or two about Celtic Christianity. And in the first place, there rises the question : was the Celtic Church of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the continuous successor of the Christian Church which undoubtedly existed in Britain during the Roman occupation ? Or, again : did Christianity conquer the whole island during the Roman rule, or was it confined, with exceptions, to the garrison towns and to the country adjacent to such towns ? There is no certain answer to either of the questions. But the more probable opinion seems to be that the Christianity of St. David, St. Dyfrig, St. Teilo, St. Iltyd, and their successors was in the main a new, or a greatly modified form of Christianity, grafted perhaps on certain remnants which had survived the Roman exodus. There are reasons to be given for these (probable) conclusions. There are no early Welsh legends which profess to give the story of the first introduction of religion into Britain, though all the legends take it for granted that the faith was established from early times. The hagiology of the British Church begins, for all practical purposes,

with the post-Roman period, and tells how Pelagianism having overwhelmed the island, certain saints from Gaul came over, routed the heretics, and established orthodoxy. It has been suggested that for Pelagianism we should read Paganism, and that the two saints, Germanus and Lupus, were, in reality, the evangelisers of Britain. No doubt, there were Christians scattered about here and there ; but the rather late monumental stone, with the inscription, *Homo Christianus fuit*, inclines one to believe that Christianity was the exception rather than the rule. Celtic scholars have wondered how an imaginative people could have been attracted by the heresy of Pelagius—which is more stupid and unenlightened than the common run of heresies—and the answer *may* be that the British never were attracted by this New Theology of the fifth century. Of course, there is the story of Bran Vendigeid ; but here we have an evident transmutation of a purely pagan demigod into a Christian saint. Gildas (a contemporary of King Arthur) knows nothing of this legend, nor indeed of any material whatsoever for the early history of British Christianity. We may take it then as a working hypothesis at all events that the early Celtic memory could go no farther back than the period of the SS. Germanus and Lupus, and this period, therefore, would be, so far as our inquiry is concerned, the epoch of the Christianisation of Britain.

From which tentative but highly probable conclusion it follows that the Celtic legends which were available for the Anglo-French romance writers of the twelfth century were legends which referred to

the saints of the fifth and sixth centuries, and not to the saints or missionaries of the first, second, and third centuries. These doubtless had existed ; but for one reason or another they had not succeeded in dwelling in the Celtic memory. And so, when we read in a romance of Joseph of Arimathæa coming from Palestine to Britain in the first century, we may translate that sentence into : X came from Gaul to Britain in the fifth century. In other words, the British Church of the Romances is a glorification of the British Church from *c.* 420 to *c.* 666, about which time Cadwallader, the last king of Britain, died, the Relics of the Saints were removed or lost, and Celtdom and the Celtic Church began to suffer their long death-agony.

Now, the lives of St. David, St. Carannoc, and of other saints of the same period are accessible in histories which date from the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century ; but whatever may be said of the date of compilation, the material used is certainly antique. There is little or no trace of Norman or Roman influence, and the manner of the legends and of the incidents described is exactly similar to the manner of the seventh century life of St. Columba by St. Adamnan. As an example of the primitive and uncorrupted state of the Welsh hagiologies, I may mention that Arthur, whose name occurs a few times, is very far indeed from having attained the position which he occupies in Geoffrey of Monmouth ; he does not even foreshadow the Arthur of the Romances. In one tale "a certain tyrant named Arthur" is punished by a saint for his impiety ; in another Life

he is represented as being in a district about twenty miles from Caerleon, the splendid capital of the later Arthurian legend, and Arthur does not know in the least where he is ! Of course there may have been another set of early Welsh stories in which Arthur was already a mystic figure, indeed it is almost certain that this was the case ; but the absence of all romantic treatment of him in the Lives of the Welsh Saints proves, I think, pretty conclusively that we may accept them as handing on faithfully traditions of the seventh and sixth centuries.

These traditions, then, are legends of the Christianising of Britain, and of the great men who carried out the work—and such done into high romantic dialect is the story of the coming of the Sangraal. To take the case of St. David first : his birth was foretold to his father by an angel in a dream. Sant (or Sandde) was to go out hunting, when he would find three things—a stag, a fish, and a honeycomb, prophetic of the son who should be born to him ; and the adventure duly fell out as the angel had foretold. The honeycomb prophesied David's wisdom, " for as the honey is in the wax, so he will hold a spiritual sense in an historical instrument "—a sentence which I venture to think a very remarkable one. But " the fish denotes his aquatic life . . . therefore David will be surnamed David of Aquatic Life." Note here the analogy of the saint and the " Rich Fisherman " of the Graal Romances ; and while this point is under consideration it may also be remarked that in South Wales there is a " Church of the Watermen "—they were rescued from the water and nourished by

miraculous fishes—and that one of the saints—Ilar—is actually called Bysgottwr, or Fisherman. It is certain, then, that early Celtic Christianity was acquainted with the Ichthus symbolism, and it would appear that at a later period the significance of the fish had been forgotten. The phrase "denotes his aquatic life," the title "vir aquaticus" seem to show that the writer of the Life was ignorant of the fact that the fish is Christ, and more especially the Christ present in the Eucharist. It is not difficult, perhaps, to imagine that from this ignorance, this confusion, arose the figure of the Roi Pêcheur, the Rich Fisherman, who keeps the Graal, the Holy Vessel which held "the Mighty, Unpolluted Fish," that is the Body and Blood of Christ: *panis ipse verus et aquae vivae Piscis*. In the earliest of the Romances the ancestor of the Graal keepers is made to catch a fish, which gives him his title; it is not difficult, I say, to suppose that such a story should be invented to account for a forgotten symbolism; and the associations which I have noted between certain of the Welsh saints and the Fish are at least worthy of attention.

There are many curious circumstances in this Life of St. David. At the Synod of Llandewibrefi it is said that David was acknowledged as "sovereign of the saints of the Isle of Britain . . . as God gave Mattheus in Judæa . . . Christ in Jerusalem, and Peter in Rome . . . so He has given St. David to be in the island of Britain." The passage is a curious one; there are already traces of the extravagant claims made for Josephes in the romances. Still more curious is another passage. The Patriarch of

Jerusalem, who is represented as the consecrator of David, gave him : "a certain hallowed altar in which the Lord's Body had reposed, which abounded in innumerable virtues. Never was this altar seen after the death of the bishop [St. David] by any son of man ; but it lies hidden, covered with skins. . . . And hence the common people call it the Gift from Heaven." And in another passage this altar is called *anceps* (doubtful, perilous, mysterious), which may be interpreted by a passage from the life of St. Carannoc, to whom "Christ gave an honourable altar from on high, the colour of which no person could comprehend."

In these three quotations, it seems to me, one has already the germ of the Graal, and of the claims made by its keepers. For it should be noted that in the early romances the chalice idea is by no means a fixed and constant one. We have seen how in the "High History" the Graal assumed five forms, the last of which was the chalice, while in the metrical romance of Borron, and in the Grand Saint Graal, the Holy Vessel is taken as the antitype of the sepulchre in which Joseph of Arimathæa had laid the Lord, and Wolfram says the Graal is a stone called Lapsit Exillit—*lapis ex coelis ?* It should be remarked also that the word graal (cratella) implies not so much a chalice as a shallow bowl on a stem ; to the mediæval mind it must have given the idea of a vessel something like the dishes on which dessert is served. St. David's altar was, in the earlier legend, a gift from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, later it became a gift from heaven ; and its "virtues," its thaumaturgic powers were due to the fact that in it,

dominicum jacebat corpus. It is an altar, and yet there is already the suggestion of hollowness in its shape, and above all it is an altar in which the Lord's Body had been laid ; it is not difficult to see how the name of Joseph of Arimathæa was suggested to later writers. And if the gifts which were called afterwards *e coelo venientia* were at first, in a more sober spirit, presents, though miraculous presents, from the Patriarch of Jerusalem ; then, it would be likely enough that St. David, at first consecrated by the Patriarch, should ultimately be consecrated by Christ from heaven. And the equations of St. David with St. Peter, with Christ Himself are undoubtedly in the same line of thought as the wild and extravagant claims made for Josephes in the Great Saint Graal. It is worth noting, too, how there is already something mysterious about the appearance of the Object ; it is called *dubius, anceps ;* the similar altar given from heaven to St. Carannoc is of a colour that no man can comprehend ; St. David's altar was not seen openly after the saint's death, even as the Graal vanished in the romances. So, when William of Malmesbury was "writing up" Glastonbury Abbey (*c.* 1130, perhaps sixty years before the earliest of the romances was written) he speaks of St. David's altar, known as *Sapphirus,* as one of the treasures of the place ; lost for a long time and then recovered. I do not think that it is temerarious to say that in the legends of these Welsh saints, hallowed in the east, endowed with miraculous altars of divine origin and of wondrous form, evangelisers of Britain, there is the probable ancestry of the great romances of the Graal.

So much for the direct analogies between the Celtic legends and the Graal books ; the indirect are, perhaps, as interesting. It is difficult, I think, to read the Lives of the Celtic Saints without recognising that a great deal of the atmosphere of the romances derives from the hagiologies. Take the following passage from the Life of St. Columba by St. Adamnan :

For three days and three nights he allowed no one to approach him, and remained confined in a house which was filled with heavenly brightness. Yet out of that house, through the chinks of the doors and keyholes, rays of surpassing brilliancy were seen to issue during the night. Certain spiritual songs also, which had never been heard before, he was heard to sing. He came to see . . . many secrets, hidden from men since the foundation of the world, fully revealed.

One of St. Columba's monks saw him on another occasion enter the church ; "and along with him at the same time a golden light that came down from the highest heavens" ; this light was seen several times, and when the saint died the whole church was filled with heavenly brightness. It would be impossible to read of these appearances of celestial light without being reminded of the glorious brightness that accompanied the manifestations of the Graal. So when St. Cadoc (to whom the Church of Caerlon is dedicated) died : "a great brightness shone on the people devoutly engaged in performing his funeral rites, so that no one of them was able to sustain it." And again in the life of St.

Fechin, a Scotch saint, we are told that when St. Fechin entered his church the multitudes saw light shining from the windows and the doors. Another topic of the romances is illustrated in the legend of St. Tathan, who found a little ship, without oars or sails, and entering boldly, was borne to Britain ; and in the strange story of the Sacred Fire of St. Cadoc, we hear how this holy relic, having been defiled by the profane, vanished away, and hurts and doles were healed no more. St. Iltyd, again, solitary in his cave by the shore, saw approaching a ship, on which was "an altar divinely supported." The oarsmen gave St. Iltyd "the perfumed body of a very holy man, whose name they told him, which he was never to utter." Taking these and other similar tales into consideration ; we might almost pronounce that the heroes of the romances are Celtic monks in armour ; there has been a certain fusion between the "monk errant" of the Celtic legends and the knights of Charlemagne, and from this admixture, which one may say was being realised at the time in the Templar Order, proceeded Galahad and the knights of the Graal.

Now, it is to be noted very carefully that when a Celtic biographer speaks of the "relics of the saints" he does *not* mean their bones. He means any holy vessels or objects which have belonged to them : such as the altars of which we have spoken ; books, bells and croziers. This is of great importance in considering the passage in Geoffrey of Monmouth, who repeats the prophecy of the angel to Cadwallader, the last king of Britain. Cadwallader died in foreign lands—in Rome, according to

the Normanised Welshman of the twelfth century, but probably in the East, perhaps in Jerusalem, in the original legend. Prosperity shall return to Britain, says the angel, when Cadwallader's bones are restored to the island and when the relics of the other saints, which had been hidden on account of the fury of the pagans, should be revealed. Here, we see, there was an old legend which connected the vanishing of certain holy objects with the great loss and doom of Britain. In the romances the loss is a final one, so far as the relic—the Graal—is concerned ; in the Celtic tradition there was to be a restoration of all things ; Cadwallader was to return, Saxons were to be eradicated, and bards were to flourish, in the words of a poem in the (twelfth century) Red Book of Hergest, which, however, makes no mention of any relics. The romances contemplate a certain fashion of restoration—Arthur was to return and rule once more—but the Graal, it would appear, has gone forever. Does this mean that the House of Anjou still clung to the idea of a British Empire, but had given up the thought of an independent British Church ? I do not venture to give even an opinion, much less a judgment ; I scarcely dare suggest the possibility of the politics, ecclesiastical or civil, of the time having had any influence in the concoction of the Romances. Wolfram, it is true, following a Graal tradition which differs curiously from the tradition of the Anglo-French romances, refers to the Chronicles of the House of Anjou as one of the sources by which he corrected Chrestien's imperfect and erroneous story : this may be either an import-

ant clue or an empty compliment to a powerful reigning house : I take refuge in confessed ignorance.

It is now time to examine a curious fact in Celtic tradition—that is the extraordinary veneration given to the relics of the saints, the remarkable powers ascribed to these relics, and the strange story of their hereditary keepers. We have already seen that in the Celtic Church practically every saint left relics behind him—bells, books, croziers, etc. So far as I know, the honour given to these objects, the miracles ascribed to them are quite unique in the history of Christianity ; and I am strongly tempted to believe that the " relics " were, in reality, the sanctified successors of tribal palladia, of certain objects which, *mutatis mutandis,* had exercised the same powers, and commanded a like veneration in heathen times. The saint's relic, in Celtdom, could do almost anything : the prosperity of the tribe (afterwards, perhaps, of the race) was bound up with its safe preservation and reverent custody ; and terrible penalties sanctioned the due observance of the relic ritual. Only those authorised by hereditary or acquired powers might so much as look on some of these objects ; and in most cases they were enshrined in reliquaries, rich with all the splendour and mystic symbolism of Celtic art. And I think that it is worth noting here the very great difference between the Roman and the Celtic attitude towards such relics and holy objects. Briefly, the difference was this : the Roman view was that the more you looked on the relics the better for you ; the Celts, on the other hand, held that

unless you had certain special qualifications you had better not come near the relics, under pain of blasting or death. The Book of St. Columba was borne in battle, and brought victory to the clan, if carried by one of pure heart—it is curious to note here the motive which, perhaps, developed into the conception of Galahad. Other relics gave oracles ; there was a bell that refused to ring save in the hand of the saint for whom it was destined by God ; another bell sailed through the air guiding its saint to an appointed place, other relics were angel-borne from heaven ; one, being removed from its shrine and habitation cried aloud, day and night, till it was restored. Some healed diseases, others detected criminals or restored lost cattle. In a word, it would be very difficult to exaggerate the immense importance which these relics occupied in the Celtic mind ; and at the present day the healing cup of Nant Eos is revered in Wales, not only for its potent cures, but also as "a Venerable Gift of the Almighty." So late as 1887 a harper, to whom the relic had been solemnly exhibited, felt profound remorse for having treated the holy thing lightly and irreverently. The man came again in a miserable condition of mind, and he was only pacified by a second exhibition of the relic, to which he paid devout reverence. In Scotland and in Ireland many of the relics also survive ; and some, wonderful to say, still belong to the descendants of their original keepers. Indeed ; the keeping of certain relics was in many cases incorporated into the feudal system ; charters are extant granting land in return for the due custody of some holy bell or crozier, and

in one or two instances the keeper was given a sort of popular title of nobility. Sad enough are the ends of some of these old songs ; a battered iron bell, with faint traces of its former splendours still surviving, turned up by the plough, or found by boys playing in a cave by the seashore ; a poor Irish schoolmaster of the eighteenth century, last of the keepers, bequeathing some wonderful piece of Celtic workmanship to the man who had befriended him—such are some of the last chapters of these strange histories. The keepers, it should be remarked, were in almost all cases the collateral descendants of the saints whose relics they had in custody ; and there was more than a trace of the belief that something of the original virtue and sanctity of the saint descended to his successor in the guardianship of the relics. It was remarked that the Irish of the twelfth century were so ignorant that they believed the possessor of St. Patrick's relics to be *ipso facto* archbishop of Armagh. Such are the facts as to the hereditary relic keepers of Celtic Christendom : it is for the student of the Graal romances to judge as to the probability of the existence of these keepers having originated the wonderful story of the hereditary guardians of the Holy Graal.

M. Paulin Paris had a most interesting theory as to Galahad. We have seen that Cadwallader, the "last King of Britain," was in Welsh legend expected to return once more, restoring all things, and bringing with him the "relics of the saints." Cadwallader, indeed, loomed a more heroic figure than Arthur in the Welsh imagination ; Celtdom

canonised him, and the churches bearing the name Llangadwaladr were built in his honour. It is noteworthy that while all other Welsh saints are styled *sant* (or sometimes *agius*), Cadwallader shares with the mystic Bran the title of Blessed, or Vendigeid (*benedictus*). One does not know what was the true history of the real man's life and death, there are various stories ; but it is certain that the date assigned for his death coincided with the death sentence of Celtdom, both in Church and State. The " yellow hag "—some form of plague—swept away the Cymri by thousands, the Saxons tightened their grip and extended it over the whole island, and strangely enough, the making of Celtic saints ceased. The Celtic monk-errants had swept all over the continent of Europe ; they had set up the rule of St. Columbanus at Bobbio, by the Pope's door, and Columbanus had addressed the Holy Father as an equal, not without a hint that any case of error or heresy on the part of the Chief Bishop of Christendom would meet with due correction from the Celtic monk. But the tide turned. Cadwallader died, the " relics of the saints " were lost, or taken into concealment, and everywhere the Roman power prevailed, abolishing Celtic customs and rites, and doing its work so thoroughly that no Celtic liturgy has survived. A dreary enchantment (from the Celtic point of view) fell upon the sanctuaries of the saints, and the abomination of desolation, in the form of the Roman missal, succeeded the High Offering of the Perpetual Choirs of the Isle of Britain.

Now M. Paulin Paris thinks that the name and

the tale of Galahad are derived from the name and the tale of Cadwallader. In the case of the name (which was sometimes spelt Catgualart and Catgualatyr) I think M. Paulin Paris is right ; and for the tale—well, there is a good deal to be said for his point of view. As Galahad, the last possessor of the Graal in the *Queste*, went to Sarras, carrying the holy vessel with him, so Cadwallader went to Jerusalem (for " Rome " in Geoffrey of Monmouth is almost certainly a substitution, partly due to a confusion between the names of the Welsh hero and a Saxon king) carrying with him, presumably, the " relics " which are to return with him. It is to be noted, also, that as Galahad was of the lineages of Joseph of Arimathæa and of Our Lady so also was Cadwallader descended collaterally from the Blessed Virgin and St. David. But it would be rash, I think, to assert that the story of the British king was more than a rough sketch for that splendid and glowng figure of Galahad. The romance writer had heard an old legend perhaps, a wandering and iuncertain and broken tale with the last glow of the Celtic fire still shining dimly from it ; and from these poor fragments he built up the miracle of the *Queste*. It would be unsafe to say that the Celtic legend counted for much more than a hint in the execution of that wonderful romance.

III

It will be understood, I hope, that these papers do not pretend, in any sense whatever, to be so much as an outline of the great literary question of the

Sangraal. They are merely notes and hints and suggestions on certain interesting points in the legend ; and my hope is that they may stimulate more learned and more fortunate questers to a deeper research.

It is not altogether necessary, then, for me to apologise for omissions ; since if I once began to do so, I should never have done ; but there is one point which I should have mentioned in my first chapter, in treating of the " pagan " elements in the story. This is the very singular and significant appearance of " a Head so rich and beautiful that never mortal saw aught so glorious " in the wonderful description of the Graal worship at Sarras, in the Grand Saint Graal. This Head was borne by one of the angels in red vestments, who served the great Rite ; it is impossible, I think, to deny its close relationship to the venerable Head of Bran, which would have made an eternal paradise for the heroes—if they had not disobeyed a certain prohibition. Meat and drink and entertainment, and the enchanted song of the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon were the portion of the followers of Bran—till they opened the door that looked towards Cornwall ; and then all delights and pleasures vanished away. The " Rich Head " of the Graal Romance is undoubtedly the pre-Christian demigod or deity, consecrated to the service of the Holy Vessel ; it is interesting to find so positive a proof of the Celtic origin of the Legend. By the way, it may be remembered that there are many traces of this Head cultus in Celtdom ; in Pembrokeshire, for instance, there is a well, sacred to St. Teilo, the water of which heals sickness, if

administered by the Hereditary Keeper in the skull of the saint. In Scotland, again, there was a saint's skull which was washed, ritually, and the water of the washing was regarded as holy and salutary ; and I should like to be instructed in the real meaning of such place names as Holyhead and Penzance. Do they mean " the Holy Headland," or do they imply that in these places there was a special cultus of the " Venerable Head " ? It is interesting to note that Penzance bears as arms a head on a dish, supposed, of course, to be the Head of St. John the Baptist.

But, for our especial purpose this " Rich Head," strangely introduced into the Graal Ritual, is of very high interest. For one cannot help thinking of that other Head—the head of Peredur's slain cousin, exhibited to him in a dish full of blood. This latter was not a holy object ; it was, apparently, an incitement to vengeance on the murderers. The dish full of blood, the spear ever dripping with blood, cried to Peredur for vengeance ; we have here, I suppose, an instance of the traps and confusions and coincidences which lurk in the Romance Literature of the Sangraal, and also an example of the way in which two streams of quite distinct origin are joined into one.

To pass on to the more immediate purpose of this article : there are many reasons for supposing that the Romances celebrate and glorify the curious and ancient quarrel between Roman and Celtic Christianity. In some of the earliest versions of the Legend, we hear of a distinct rite called the " Graal Service." This ritual was performed at Terce (the mediæval hour for the principal mass of the day) ;

it was called "going to Grace," and it would seem that the worshippers were rapt into an ecstacy. Again, in the "High History" we hear of "the priests and hermits of the Graal," who are removed by the Lord God into a sure place during the usurpation of the King of Castle Mortal; and in the Queste the "service of the Holy Graal" was performed divinely in the precious chapel where the Holy Graal used to appear. To me it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that in such passages as these we have highly romantic allusions to the Celtic Church; the possessor of sacrosanct and Eucharistic Relics, *e coelo venientia*, and of a distinct Eucharistic Rite. How far we may take the Romance allusions is conjectural, and perhaps will always remain conjectural. It may be that the allusions of the "High History" and the Queste are fairly accurate accounts of events which really happened, it may be that they have the slenderest historical foundations; we do not know and probably we never shall know.

And now as to the peculiarities of the Celtic Church as distinct from the Roman. Here many we are in a region of few certainties and again possibilities and probabilities. One thing, at least, is certain: the anti-Celtic fervour of the Roman authorities was so thorough that there is no such thing as a Celtic Liturgy in existence; and, perhaps, the latest reference to such a thing dates back to the twelfth century, when the remnant of the Culdees are reported as celebrating "some kind of barbarous rite" in a corner of a Scotch church. There are few certainties beyond this; but there are probabilities.

I have already said that I accept as a working hypothesis the theory that the Celtic Church was really the work of the fifth century, and that it was organised by Gallican missionaries ; and that being granted it follows necessarily that the churches of Britain and Ireland were of the type that is called Oriental. Of course, all Christianity is, in origin, a Syrian mission ; but for whatever reason or reasons, the local Roman Church became differentiated from all others at a very early period, and developed a Liturgy—the Latin Mass—which it is convenient to call Western. It would be tedious in the highest degree to examine minutely the variations between the Rite of Constantinople and the Rite of Rome ; it will be sufficient to say that the most important of the many differences between the two services is the presence of the Epiclesis in the Eastern, and its absence from the Western Eucharist. The Epiclesis is the Invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Elements (in some Eastern Rites on the congregation also), and in the Divine Liturgy of St. James it runs as follows :

Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great goodness, and send upon us, and upon these proposed gifts, Thy most Holy Ghost . . . who descended upon Thy holy Apostles in the likeness of fiery tongues in the upper room of the holy and glorious Sion, at the day of Pentecost : send down the same most Holy Ghost, Lord, upon us, and upon these holy and proposed gifts, that coming upon them with His holy and good and glorious presence, He may hallow and make this bread the holy Body of Thy Christ.

People. Amen.
Priest. And this cup the precious Blood of THY CHRIST.
People. Amen.

It is by this formula, or by some equivalent prayer, that the present Orthodox Church of the East believes the mystery of the consecration to be effected ; the West—the Roman and English churches—on the other hand, make the efficacy of the sacrament to depend upon the due recital of the Words of Institution. And yet I believe that the Eastern Church would hardly declare all the consecrations of the West to be void and of none effect.

This, then, is the Epiclesis, and it is almost certain that the British Liturgy possessed some such formula. It is not absolutely certain, because, as I have stated, there is no Celtic Liturgy in existence ; but the probability is very high—indeed, considering the derivation of the Celtic Church of the fifth century from the Church of Vienne and Lyons, is almost inevitable. It should be noted, by the way, that the early Gallican Church in question occupied a peculiar position with respect to the Epiclesis. The formula was not, as in the East, an integral and essential portion of every Mass ; it occurred in the Eucharists on certain saints' days, and not on those of others, and such, we may presume, was its place in the ritual of Celtic Christendom—unless, indeed, the Celts followed the more primitive and allied Mozarabic Rite, in which, I think, the Invocation of the Holy Spirit is invariably used.

Now, in some of the Graal Romances there are

curious references to certain "secret words" used in the Eucharist; a claim is made, if the expression may be allowed, for a super-valid consecration. Robert de Borron, for example, says that he dare not speak of the secrets revealed to Joseph, and if he would he could not, without the Great Book:

> Ou les estoires sont escrites,
> Par les grans clercs feites et dites,
> La sont li grant secre escrit,
> Qu'on nomme le Graal.

Is this a reference to a Celtic Liturgy, or rather to a vague rumour of a Celtic Liturgy? Are the "grant secre" of the Graal Service the Prayer of Invocation? I think there is a remote possibility that this is so; I dare not say more. Wales conformed to the Roman Church between 750–809; and therefore we may conclude that the prescription of the Celtic Liturgy began towards the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries. It is quite likely that the native ritual was not extinguished without a struggle; it is quite likely that it continued to be celebrated by patriot recluses, by "saints" who had oratories among the rocks and among the woods for a long period after the Roman Missal had become the only legal use; it is quite likely that the primitive Liturgy endured long enough for the rumour of it to have reached the ears of the Romance writers. The Graal Service was said divinely in the precious chapel where the Graal itself had once been wont to appear. This *may* mean that the Celtic Ritual was used, after long pretermission, in an oratory where once some

venerated altar, reputed to be of heavenly origin, had been preserved—it would be temerarious to say more.

There is another probable argument in favour of this identification of the Graal Service with the British Rite. In the Grand Saint Graal, the first Mass is described—in connection with the alleged Apostolate and Primacy of Josephes, son of Joseph of Arimathæa. The passage is as follows :

Laiens fist Josephe le premier sacrement qui onques fust fais a celui peule, mais il eut moult tost accompli, kar il ne dist que celes paroles seulement, qant Jesu-Cris dist a ses dessiples a la chaine : " Venes, si mangies et chou est li miens cors qui pour vous et pour maintes autres gens sera livre a martire et a torment." Et autress ; leur dist del vin : " Tenes et si beves tout Car chou est li sanc di ma nouviele loy, li miens meismes, ki pour vous sera espandus en remision des pechies."

Now the Roman Formula of Consecration is, for the bread :

Hoc est enim Corpus meum,

and for the wine :

Hic est enim Calix sanguinis mei, novi et æterni testamenti : mysterium fidei : qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.

The question is : where did the author of the Grand Saint Graal get his formulæ ? Professor Warren, an authority on Celtic Christianity, thinks that there is " ground," but not " proof " for *con-*

frangetur, as the word in use in the lost British Liturgy. It may be noted that there is proof of very early intercourse between the Egyptian and Celtic churches, and that the Coptic consecration formula is similar to that of the Romance in its use of the future tense. Again, it is not wise to do more than suggest a probability. It would be delightful if one could point to the words of the Grand Saint Graal as an undoubted fragment of the lost Ritual of our fathers: but to do this were to play the Higher Critic in his wildest moods. It may be that here we have a remnant of the Celtic Liturgy; we must not be more positive. The general position—that the "Graal Church" symbolises the Celtic Church—is, I think, probable in a very high degree; the particular conclusions must be left in doubt and in mist.

There is one very odd circumstance about the "Parzival" of Wolfram von Eschenbach. We have seen that he accused Chrestien of having told the wrong story; he himself professes that he corrected Chrestien by the Chronicles of the House of Anjou, and by the narrative of one Kyot, or Guiot, a Provencal. However that may be, the "Parzival" is in one most important respect entirely distinct from all the other romances. A graal, as we have seen, probably implied to the readers of the romance, a shallow bowl (or deep dish) on a stem and foot, and we have noted also the curious uncertainty which seems to have existed as to the exact shape of the Holy Vessel. In one romance it assumes five forms, the last of which is the chalice, in another it is an image of the sepulchre

in which Christ's body was laid by Joseph ; the paten being the stone slab placed on top of the grave. It is at once a chalice, and also the vessel in which Christ willed that His Body should be offered and sacrificed ; there is a singular ambiguity. One story says that it was the vessel in which Christ washed the Apostles' feet ; another that in it He "made His sacrament." And one cannot help thinking of St. David's Altar, *in quo dominicum jacebat corpus.*

In the "Parzival" the Graal is a stone called Lapsit Exillit. It was hallowed, its virtue was ever renewed, by a Dove that brought on the Good Friday of each year a consecrated Host from heaven, laying It on the Graal. There is no reference whatever to the Precious Blood ; and it seems impossible that the Graal of Wolfram's conception could have served any of the uses of a cup or chalice. It was a stone that had fallen from the crown of Lucifer when the great angel was driven from heaven ; a precious stone presumably ; and one is reminded of William of Malmesbury's reference to St. David's Altar lost, and restored (so he says) to Glastonbury, and called *Sapphirus.* I do not say that Wolfram's story proves that the Graal was originally an altar and not a chalice ; I am content to affirm that it is evidence strongly in favour of that hypothesis. The sculptured stone (eighth or ninth century, I believe) at Nigg, in Scotland, would seem to illustrate an idea not remote from Wolfram's. In the centre of the stone there is figured a vessel like a very shallow champagne glass, or a saucer on a stem ; above this hovers a dove, holding in its beak

a round disc, resembling a wafer. On each side an ecclesiastic bows in adoration ; and below two lions crouch to the ground.

Now, accepting as an hypothesis the altar theory, the question naturally arises : How did the altar become transformed into a chalice ? This, I think, is not an insoluble enigma ; and the answer may probably be obtained from William of Malmesbury's eulogy of Glastonbury Abbey, in which there are several notable points. Firstly, it is said by William that the body of Joseph of Arimathæa was buried somewhere in the precincts of the abbey, and so far as I know there is no earlier mention of Joseph in connection with Glastonbury or with Britain. The story dates from *c.* 1130–40. Secondly, it states that with the body were buried two phials containing the Precious Blood of Christ ; and here, it seems to me, we have the secret of the Graal of the romance writers. Nor is it difficult to trace this invention of the legend to its origin. Somewhere in the thirties of the twelfth century, a crusading knight had remitted to the town of Bruges a phial said to contain the Blood of Christ, which the Church of Antioch had given him, in reward for great services rendered against the miscreants. The phial in question, which is still preserved at Bruges, and venerated by the faithful, is adorned with work of the seventh or eighth century ; beyond that date, of course, history must give place to legend. But it is certain that in the beginning of the twelfth century the cultus of the Precious Blood received a great impetus ; and the inventive William endowed Glastonbury with a Relic which would be certain to

enhance the prestige of the convent. It does not seem hard to imagine that the Norman-French romance writers combined two distinct objects, the altar of St. David or of some other Welsh saint, with the supposed phials of Glastonbury, and that the union of the two instruments produced the Sangraal. An altar could not hold blood ; a phial would not serve in the Eucharistic connection which attached to the altar, and so a compromise was effected, and the Holy Graal, at first a vague and ill-defined object, put on at last the form of the chalice, and yet was spoken of as the vessel in which God willed that His Body should be offered. There is no proof of all this : most likely there never will be ; but it seems to be a very probable solution of a most difficult question.

Then, of course, there is the substitution of the name of Joseph of Arimathæa for our (hypothetical) Welsh saint ; and here again the difficulties do not strike me as insuperable. So far as I know there is no reason to suppose that the Legend of Joseph as the Evangelist of Britain existed before the beginning of the twelfth century. But it was fashionable, if we may use the term, for every Church in Christendom to claim an Apostolic or semi-apostolic origin ; and it is easy to understand that such names as Dewi and Carannoc, Iltyd and Ilar, had no particular prestige or enchantment for Norman-French ears, or for readers of Paris town. The Precious Blood cultus had suggested the phials, the belief of the Glastonbury monks that the body of Joseph was buried in their abbey, was, possibly, a convent tradition ; it was simple to put things

together, to make Joseph the founder of British Christianity, and the possessor of a priceless relic. The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus supplied the tale of his imprisonment by the Jews ; his voyage to Britain was probably suggested by the Legend of the Saintes Maries de la Mer, and, indeed, one of the names occurring in the Grand Saint Graal is taken bodily from the Provencal story ; and so the romance grows, mingling Celtic legends, apocryphal gospels, missionary tales, a popular cultus, and sheer invention in books of the most wonderful and glorious inspiration. And this last is, after all, by far the greatest element. Matters of varying merit went into the crucible ; it was the power of the mediæval artistry that was the red powder, glistering and glorious as the sun, which transformed, transmuted, re-created, glorified, changing copper into gold, wandering and broken legends into splendid romance. The change seems to me not improbable ; for the thirteenth century was the age in which Salisbury Cathedral was built, and the time that could raise the rough ashlar to such power and glory and dominion and spiritual life, was doubtless able to form rough literary materials into the great temple of the Graal Romances.

THE MYSTIC SPEECH

I SUPPOSE that there are certain scraps of wisdom, practical and theoretical, that very few of us have escaped.

There is the case of mustard, for example. I was comparing notes on this matter with two of my friends the other day, and I found, as I had expected to find, that all three of us had been instructed in the fabled utterance of Mr. Colman : " Mr. Colman said that he hadn't made his fortune by the mustard which people put on their beef, but by the mustard which they left on their plates."

This instance, it is seen, is purely moral and practical in its nature ; it cautions one against the wasteful use of an agreeable condiment. But there are two other anecdotes which all the young have received, I think, in their day, that are more to our purpose. One tells how Stephenson watched the kettle boil, the lid thereof vehemently rising and falling, and so invented the steam-engine. The other shows the illustrious Newton, idling or meditating in the orchard. An apple drops to the ground ; and the theory of gravitation is the result.

Few, I say, can have escaped these instructive stories ; but I hardly think that the true moral has generally been drawn from them. So far as I am aware, they are usually employed to show that a mere

trivial accident issues in a great discovery. Indeed, I am half inclined to believe that this moral belongs to the chapter called "The Malice of the Undistinguished." The Undistinguished do not compose music; so they make up a tale to the effect that Handel, walking through Edgeware, heard the church bells ringing and the blacksmith's hammer clinking; and thus wrote "The Harmonious Blacksmith." I regret to say that the actual process was still simpler; for Handel "cribbed" the tune in question from an old French composer. But I have always believed that the Undistinguished would fain say: "If I had been walking that day in Edgeware and had heard those bells and that hammer; then I should have written 'The Harmonious Blacksmith.'" And so, I fancy, the Undistinguished would insinuate that they would have thought out gravitation and invented the steam-engine easily enough, if they had been in that orchard and that kitchen. The Undistinguished hate genius, for it is a mystery, and mystery is anathema to them.

But this apart, I do not think that the real moral has been drawn from the instances of the apple and the kettle. The real moral is *not* that great things spring from trivial incidents. It is rather this: that great things can be and are before the eyes of men for countless ages, and yet are not perceived. For how many æons had fruit fallen to the ground before the eyes of men? That is a question for the geologists and palæontologists; it may be answered briefly: so long as there have been men on the earth. I do not know the judged antiquity of hot

water. I presume it must be nearly coeval with the age of fire ; at any rate, the steam must have lifted the lid of the pot for many rolling centuries before the day of Stephenson. Homer's heroes saw this marvel by the shores of the wine-dark sea ; and yet they saw it not. They did not discern it.

Now, of course, it may be objected that the true state of the case is this : that both Newton and Stephenson had the prepared mind, the soil made ready for the seed ; in one case the scientific mind, in the other the mechanical mind ; and that in the case of the engine inventor there had been for fifty or sixty years a great progress in mechanical work, which had made the way ready for him. And it might be alleged that the minds of the Homeric heroes—let us say—were so wholly alien and remote from physical theories of the universe and mechanical improvements that the phenomenon in question could not possibly make any impression on them. There is something in this. I confess that if I pass along the London streets and see in a bookseller's window a pamphlet with the title "The Lentil, the Secret of Everlasting Life," I go on without considering the matter, knowing that it is no sort of concern of mine. So, it may be urged, science and mechanics had to progress and be extended for many years before the apple and the kettle could become in any way significant.

This is very well ; but how about the case of Logic ? Here is a matter which has nothing to do with any applied science, with any long course of subsidiary inventions. It exists without any reference to the exterior state of man, to war or peace,

riches or poverty, learning or ignorance. The matter of logic is of the matter of man himself : the man without it is no longer a man. It is inherent in every use of the word " because " ; there cannot fail to be a syllogism in every action we perform. It is not, indeed, true to say that the reasoning process is the exclusive prerogative of man, for I believe it is pretty clear that many of the brutes reason ; but it is true that a man who does not reason is inconceivable. It is not merely that without the reasoning process he could not write the " Ode on a Grecian Urn " ; without it he could never catch his train to the city ; without it the palæolithic man could never have overcome the mastodon.

Here, then, is a faculty which is absolutely necessary to man, infinitely more necessary to him than his arms or his legs : and yet it was not till the days of Aristotle that this faculty was, as it were, perceived, analysed, displayed as an intelligible thing, with its certain and fixed laws. Yet, centuries before the days of Aristotle, there had been mighty, prosperous, and peaceful civilisations. I remember reading that the Italian explorers finding the plumbing and the bathrooms of the Cretan period, which flourished about 2500 B.C., threw up their hands and said, " Absolutely English ! " And I suppose perfect plumbing is an undeniable proof of a high civilisation. Then there was Babylon ; then there was Egypt ; there were nations, that is, which had their leisured, thoughtful, philosophic classes : and yet this process of reasoning which they used every day and every hour of their lives was hidden

from them. It was seen ; and yet it was not seen. You see, we can no longer say as is said of the kettle and the apple : " But people weren't so curious about these things ; their minds didn't run that way." In a certain sense, anybody's mind must run in the way of logic, if it is to run at all ; and specifically, the leisured and cultured class that exists in every civilisation cannot help turning its thoughts toward the reasoning process. Yet, I repeat, the analysis of ratiocination was not performed till the late age of Aristotle.

Now for an instance which I think is even more curious. Washington Irving, the American writer, was a man of very wide literature, of a very delicate and delightful perceptiveness ; he was a man, I would say, alert in the discovery of beautiful things, and quaint things. He almost succeeded in enchanting the State of New York with his legend of it ; and this seems to me an amazing achievement. Above all he was a lover of the old, gracious, kindly life of England and all its dear, merry observances ; never was a man fonder of an ancient thing, just because it was ancient. Yet, this Washington Irving, writing in the 'twenties of the last century, speaks with a kindly contempt of the Gothic of Westminster Abbey, as " barbarous ornament." He likes it, certainly, but merely because it is old ; in his heart he despises himself for liking it ; he knows that it is all savagery, that he has no business to like it.

Now this seems to me a most extraordinary case. Here is a man of very much more than average artistic sympathy absolutely blind to the wonder and

beauty and splendour of Gothic. It is before him, great and visible ; but he can't see it, and doesn't see it. A cloud, one would say, comes down and is heavy before his eyes so that all alike is hidden ; both the spiritual aspiration, the divine poetry of the whole building, and the marvel of the detailed ornament which is as the marvel of the earth breaking into leaf and flower and greenness, in the season of spring. Washington Irving sees Westminster Abbey ; but he sees it not.

And, of course, it had been so for two centuries or more. From 1620 to 1820, one may say, nobody had seen Gothic at all. It is interesting to look at eighteenth century prints of cathedrals ; for it is at once quite evident that the artists did not really see what they drew. If you look at these engravings from a little distance, you might almost say that the artist had been gazing not at Peterboro' or Lincoln Cathedral, but at a clever model made by a boy with wooden bricks and bits of wire. Draw closer and examine the detail, and it is all almost incredibly false ; the tracery, the cusps, the mouldings are not a bit like the objects that were before the artist's eyes ; everything is parodied, degraded, cheapened. It is difficult to believe that the man who drew the picture had really seen the cathedral at all ; that he was not working from rough jottings supplied by a Chinaman or a Choctaw. But it is interesting to note that these bald cusps, these cheap-looking pillars, these cast iron piers and arches (in the View of the Interior) have very much the effect that is produced by many of the pieces of the Gothic revival. There is actually a church in Derby of

which the window tracery is in cast iron: the effect is very similar to the effect of the eighteenth century print. And so here you have the artist, the man of the trained eye, whose business it is to see and represent, utterly unable to see what was before him. His case is more remarkable than that of the mere lay observer, such as Smollett, who speaks with actual horror of York Minster as a barbarous and altogether ghastly structure that should speedily be supplanted by a "neat Grecian room." Yet Smollett was an acute man, and a travelled man. But he saw York Minster; and it affected him as a coal cellar might affect us.

To take yet another instance. Dr. Johnson in the first place was an entirely honest man. He was utterly incapable of professing admiration if he did not sincerely feel admiration. He would never have praised that which he did not approve, merely because it was fashionable to praise. His great maxim was "clear your mind of cant": think honestly, without regard to fashions or conventions of any kind. One is quite certain, then, that his literary judgments were absolutely honest judgments. And, again, he was a man of very wide reading. He loved his age, but he was very well read in the literature of all ages; he was well furnished, that is, with examples and standards of comparison. Yet Johnson firmly held that Pope's work was not merely poetry; it was the touchstone of poetry—"If Pope did not write poetry, what is poetry?" And he was not able to disguise his opinion that if Milton's Lycidas were not rubbish it was something perilously near it.

Now we may almost say of Lycidas that which Johnson said of Pope's work: it is almost the touchstone of poetry. And Pope, with all his brilliance, his polish, and his wit, scarcely wrote poetry at all. So here is another instance of the honest and skilled and trained eye seeing and not seeing. Nay, though Lycidas is written with affectionate remembrance of the classic models in literature which Johnson loved, yet he could not see its shining beauty; he found it drivel or almost drivel.

And it will not do by any means to say that the late seventeenth century and the whole of the eighteenth century were "inartistic." They were nothing of the kind. St. Paul's Cathedral is not Gothic, but it is a mighty architectural masterpiece of its sort, both in its main design and in its detail. How great it is you may judge by comparing it with a modern attempt in the same order of architecture; that miserable joss-house in the Brompton Road called the Oratory. And if there be a pure art, it is music; and the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century produced such masters as Purcell, Handel, Mozart, Pergolesi, and the arch-master of all musicians, John Sebastian Bach. And you had deep theology in Butler, and in Law, the follower of Bohme; and on the whole, one may say, you had what should have been the best jury in the world, an assemblage of men of learning, acuteness, wide reading, and much leisure who wrote and appreciated without either the desire or the necessity of pleasing the populace. Indeed, so far as they were concerned, there was no populace; the well-informed wrote for the well-informed.

Yet they could not see the beauty of Gothic—though Horace Walpole and a few others pretended that they saw it—they could not see the beauty of Lycidas. To these men an illuminated Book of Hours of the thirteenth century, which is one of the principal beauties of man's spirit and hands, would seem a mere grotesque. It would appeal to them as an oddity, much as some queer idol from the South Seas appeals to us, an affair of ugly, elaborate ingenuity.

And now for the last instance of all, and the strangest, of this blindness of man to things that are evidently before his eyes. Whatever we see or do not see, we can not help seeing the visible world that is before our eyes, from the star above to the flower at our feet. And yet we may say that it was not till 1796 or thereabouts that men so much as approximated to the significance of the great sacrament of the world. It is true that there had been hints written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, but they were but hints ; it was left to the age of Coleridge and Wordsworth to discern that in the spectacle of external nature there is something much more than mere pleasantness or sensuous beauty—Horace found both these elements in his "*fons Bandusiae splendidior vitro*"—that in fact, there is a revelation of things hidden in things which are open to all. It is clear then, that in a sense Coleridge and his fellows discovered the significance of the invisible world ; there was given to them a revelation of that which had been hidden from the beginning.

So it will seem pretty clear, I think, considering

all the instances which I have quoted in physical science, in mental science, in architecture, in literature, in the contemplation of trees and clouds and streams and flowers, that things which are most clear may yet be most closely hidden, and hidden for long ages, and hidden not only from the gross and sensual man, but from the fine and cultured man. And that being evident, does not the consequence follow that we who have certainly not attained to perfection of any kind, may be, nay, almost certainly are, as blind as those who have gone before us ; that we, too, gaze at great wonders, both of the body and the spirit, without discerning the marvels that are all around us ? And again, it would appear that we may be groping after the perception of things which we apprehend in a dim and broken and imperfect manner. I have alluded to Walpole and his sham Gothic, and I suppose that Walpole was beset by a sort of vague idea that there was something in this architecture of a past age which was somehow or other curious and admirable. So Walpole tried to attain to it ; and it is quite clear from his imitations that he was far indeed from the truth of the matter.

Now one would not for a moment class the school of Coleridge in its appreciation of nature with the school of Walpole in its appreciation of the Gothic. But may it not be that Coleridge and his fellows were but the forerunners of a new doctrine which was not fully revealed to them ? It was the misfortune, I think, of Coleridge that after his first rush and flood of inspiration he went after the strange metaphysical gods of Germany, clouding his soul with a more deadly drug than the opium which he

applied to his body. He thought that he was drinking a strong spiritual wine ; he was, in reality, swallowing the winds of the North Sea, which are but sour emptiness. The light within him became dim ; he talked of his "system" in place of seeing visions. He forgot that he had already found truth ; he thought he was going to find it by some wretched abracadabra charm of "object" and "subject," by some mumbo-jumbo incantation of the distinction between the reason and the understanding. I would not say at all that he despised his poetry ; but he thought himself embarked in a far higher quest of something that he called the Truth ; whereas the fact is that his poetry at its finest was the truth and the vital truth.

Let me say here : that in the Catholic Faith, the highest and final and uttermost mystery is not contained in the Symbol of St. Athanasius, but in the simplest rite in the world, in the matter of natural, familiar, physical things which all men know and taste and see, that is, in bread and in wine. That is the manner in which the Christian religion protests against all the horrible heresies which, under various disguises, have taught that the world and all that therein is, are the work, not of God but of the Devil ; thus it signifies to us that the way to the spiritual things is by the gate of the sensible things. This is the secret language, open to all men but disregarded by all, or almost all. This is the witness against those who would maintain that lectures and "jawings" in general, and moralisings and philosophies, are higher matters than the scent and colour of a rose, rightly apprehended, than the

flame of torches, than the odour of incense, than golden vestments, than High Mass : that is, than Bread and Wine.

Now I have said that all manner of things may be under the eyes of men through long ages, and yet be unperceived, undiscerned by them. This is true, and yet these things are none the less there. The stone-age man, hunting for his dinner and avoiding monstrous beasts, was arguing in Barbara and Celarent all the while, though he knew it not. And be sure, that he who tried to argue in Barbare and Celarant soon ceased to argue at all, for he died of hunger or was crushed by dinosaurs. And so, in spite of eighteenth century blindness, the splendours of Lincoln and Durham were not in any way veiled. They shone in glory, though dim eyes could only see barbarous confusion. And so this secret language of the visible universe, though it may not have been openly spoken, was everywhere whispered. It is the sure mark of a fool or an ignoramus or both to declare—for instance—that the Song of Solomon is just a beautiful Oriental love-song and nothing more. I believe that the Oriental scholar who is nothing more than an Oriental scholar can smash this falsity ; he will be able to prove that the symbolism of the Song of Songs is in an age-old language of the East, which has persisted to this day ; that the sacred books of the Sikhs speak in this tongue, that the Babis of Persia are familiar with it. But, apart from all scholarship, those who have eyes and ears, the common senses of humanity, can perceive not only that the apples and wine and love and banqueting of the " Song " refer to divine and

eternal mysteries ; the Christian Church has always seen that, the Jewish Church always knew that the thirst of the hart for the waterbrooks really showed the longing of the soul for God. That is one side of the question, and an important side : but there is another. And that is, the correlative truth, that all these things—apples, waterbrooks, wine, feasting, human love—owe all their significance, all their value, all their light, all their beauty to the fact that they are both images and sacraments of eternal joys and wonders and delights ; to the fact that they are words, as it were, in the secret language of God ; that they are communications, in varying degrees, of the divine mysteries. An old prayer says : " Let us so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal." Our blessed but idiotic reformers, in translating this prayer, inserted the word *finally* : " Let us so pass through things temporal, that we *finally* lose not the things eternal." This would mean : " Do let us be careful not to eat too many apples or drink too much wine or look at sunsets too long (when we might be writing business letters) or we shan't go to heaven." In fact, the great sentence would be turned into a choice piece of that twopenny morality which is so dear to the English heart, which leads, if not to the City of God, at all events to the City of London, which we call " the City."

But the true meaning of the ancient sentence is of course : Let us apprehend the eternal savours of the things of time. Through all the beauties and delights of this earth, let us see, veiled, the beauties and delights of the everlasting. A cup of cold

water will win paradise ; but a cup of cold water is already a part of paradise. Wine maketh glad the heart of man ; that is because its parent grape was grown in the vineyards of the Kingdom. An earthly feast is a goodly thing ; because there is a heavenly feast. Dawn and sunset are wonders to look upon, being pale reflections of eternal splendours. And as to the feast : I was once talking to a Scottish philosopher, a Hegelian, who could not stomach Plato. "Why Plato maintains," said he, "that there is actually a table set in the heavens." Of course, Plato was perfectly right : if there were no table in the heavens, there would certainly be no table on earth. Two-legged beasts would, no doubt, eat and drink to satisfy their hunger and their thirst after the fashion of other beasts ; but there would be no table, and these beasts, though they might be cunning, would not be men ; that is, sons of God.

The *adoro to devote Latens Deitas* of St. Thomas Aquinas has its special and sacred application to the Mystery of the Altar ; but, like all universal truths as distinct from various pieces of information about things—which is the best definition of physical science—the doctrine implied "goes through" even to the uttermost parts of the earth. That which is on high is as that which is below ; and the "latent deity" is latent in all things.

In all things, that is, that have not been clouded and defiled and deprived of their divinity by the ill will of man. I remember that there was an instruction given to me on joining a certain secret society, that one should so see and so think as to

behold and know nothing but God. I considered this point, and when I next met my instructor I was frank with him. I said : "While I was reading that matter of finding nothing at all but God, I was sitting in my arm-chair in Gray's Inn and looking at the tiles about my hearth. They are horrible things though shiny, horrible both in colouring and in design. I must resolutely refuse to see anything of Divinity in them." And my teacher confessed that the matter was difficult. I cannot remember that he found me any solution.

But a few months ago, when I was writing a chapter in my reminiscences, this incident occurred to me, and my memory went back many long years, and I wrote somewhat as follows :

"Everything to me was wonderful, everything visible was the veil of an invisible secret. Before an oddly shaped or coloured stone I was ready to fall into a sort of reverie or meditation, as if it had been a fragment of paradise or fairyland. There was a certain herb of the fields that grew plentifully in Gwent that even now I cannot regard without a kind of reverence ; it is a spire of small yellow blossoms, and its leaves when crushed give out a very pungent and aromatic odour. This odour was to me a separate revelation or mystery, as if no one in the world had smelt it but myself ; and so the whole earth, down to the very pebbles, was but the veil of a quickening and adorable secret. I look back to the time when the mountain and the tiny shining stone, the flower and the brook, were all alike, signs and evidences. I see myself all alone in the valley under hanging woods of a still summer evening,

entranced, wondering what the secret was that here was almost told."

And that, or something like that, I suppose, must have been in the mind of the hierarch, whoever he may have been, who told those about to be initiated that they must find God in all things.

And so, I go on and say that you cannot write of anything or make the image of anything without writing of God or making the image of veiled divinity—heeding always, the examples of the tiles in my sitting-room in Gray's Inn. Man is almost omnipotent ; he can quite destroy for himself and the fools who trust in him the great work of God. It is within the power of the sculptor—look about London—to say " Let us make man in the image of sheer stupidity and chaos and nonsense, or rather in the image of the fashion plates of this or that year, very badly carried out in bronze." It is in the power of the writer to be enormously clever, to shew the vastest knowledge of the common thoughts of people at large, and to write long, highly successful books which nearly everybody says are " like life " or " slices of life." Indeed these things are like life ; as Madame Tussaud's waxwork is like life or as a beefsteak is, most undeniably, a slice of life. But these things are not life, because the *latens deitas* which makes life is not discerned in them. I will not take any English examples, though these be many and flagrant, but I would say that the short stories of Guy de Maupassant illustrate my meaning perfectly. They are exquisite studies indeed ; but in entomology, not in humanity.

But, as I say, corruption or blindness apart, it is

impossible to write of anything without writing of God ; and this is true of the simple, homely things, as well as of the splendid, glowing, and illustrious things. The secret language is spoken everywhere and by all creatures. The foolish and the folklorists read, for very different reasons, their Arabian Nights in Burton's version. I always knew by instinct that Burton was all wrong from any point of view save that of the collector of Oriental manners and customs ; and when I had struggled through a page or two—I never could manage more—of his detestable English, I knew by experience that he was all wrong. The wise read the Arabian Nights not for manners and customs, but for splendours and for wonders, for the story of hidden doors that are suddenly disclosed in ways of daily passage, for the vision of jewels which glow like the sun and moon and all the assemblage of the stars, for the magic carpet, for the tent which can shelter a host and yet be folded in the hand, for the magic, for the divinity, that is, which every uncorrupted mind perceives to be latent in life. And I would go a step farther and say that I believe that the uncorrupted mind perceives by instinct that all these marvels are real. Not actual, perhaps ; I would not dare to say that that tent which can shelter an army and then be reduced to the compass of the palm of the hand will ever be a part of ordnance ; but still it is real, real in the power of human imagination and transcendence. Law, you know, following Bohme, as I suppose, taught that before the Fall the universe was " fluid " —this must refer to the period before the electrons became atoms—that is, obedient to the will of man.

After the Fall, it "hardened," but not altogether. Aladdin's Palace still rises in a single night.

I suppose, then, it is no great task to see in such a book as the Arabian Nights a veiled picture of the wonders and the splendours of the world ; that is of the glory of God in the world ; but there are obscurer ways of the secret language, which speaks in the simplest things as well as in the most splendid things. Indeed, we have already seen that the Psalmist found a thirsty stag a good enough image of the great desire of the soul for God ; and, again, in the twenty-third Psalm such homely symbols as wine, oil, and a table are sufficient in his view to convey a meaning which is deep and high enough. It is then, I think, to be considered whether bread and cheese and beer and a safe hearth and a roaring fire and a secure rooftree on a bitter and stormy night may not have their significance. These are vulgar things, I know, but oil is quite a vulgar thing to an Oriental. To me an olive tree is a sacred tree ; the first sight of it was a revelation, the silvery green of the olive orchards was a veritable magic-carpet journey in time rather than in space. But well do I remember how the old Provencal lady shook her sides when I confessed that I gazed with reverence on the olives about her farm.

I am sorry to refer so often to the Holy Scriptures. I know it is an Oriental book, but it has been so long translated into the tongues of the West that I am afraid that it has become almost as vulgar as bread and cheese and a warm fire on a cold night. Still, the Psalm *Benedicite omnia opera*—to put a good Latin face on it—is much to my purpose, and

I would ask you to think over these measured appeals to showers and dew, winds and fire, winter and summer, frost and cold, ice and snow to "bless the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him forever." All these, you see, are the commonest of common things; yet they are addressed by the Children with Angels and Saints, as if they were creatures in the Eternal Chorus. And so addressed, as I believe, because they too, according to their degree, utter the eternal Word, and though of earth speak to the instructed ever of unearthly wonders. And thus I think it is that if you know how to describe a lonely man stumbling on his way up a long and winding lane on a winter's night, buffeted with mountain winds, drenched with driving rains, overwhelmed with darkness, and yet attaining at length to homely shelter, to a seat on the settle by a roaring fire, to a place whence he can listen to the storm without: well, incidentally, you have made literature, but essentially you have described the passage into paradise. And that, by the way, is no doubt the true definition of literature—of the secret language, well-expressed—it must deal with the passage to paradise; and if you are to apprehend this secret language you have got to understand that the villa at Dulwich where Mr. Pickwick rested from his pilgrimage is, in fact, paradise. I am sorry that Dulwich is just a suburb of London, with three stations, attainable from Victoria, Ludgate Hill, Holborn Viaduct, or London Bridge. I am aware that it ought to be called Oomotigala or Ispadan or something queer. Still, there it is; and I am afraid I must say that anybody who has difficulty in

finding Dulwich a fit symbol of paradise had better abandon the study of the secret language forever. But such persons will have Blake against them. They will have Plato, a greater name, against them, with his Table in the Heavens. They will have Solomon the King with his wine and apples against them. They will have the Psalmist with his wine and oil against them. They will have every good man against them ; they will be in the company of the accursed Manichees and in the company of all the fools who have maintained that the earth is not the Lord's but the Devil's. It is written that he who cannot love his visible brother can in no wise love the invisible Deity. That is, evidently, the same doctrine in another phrase. I would also say that he who cannot see the eternal gifts in bread and cheese and beer and homely friendship and kindly mirth may gabble occult abracadabras all his days ; but he shall never taste of the eternal refections of paradise, or sing the new song of the redeemed. The stubborn child who will not learn the alphabet, it is clear, shall neither read nor write immortal verse ; though the alphabet, to be sure, is a horrid, elemental thing with all sorts of silly and tedious associations about it.

It is curious how this secret language has informed all fine literature from all time. It has had many modes of expression ; but there is one in particular that I would remark. When the great legend of the Holy Graal, and especially the Percival branch of that legend, came up before the Folklorists, they said, and said very justly, that the story of Percival was an example of the Exile and Return and

Vengeance Formula. That is, your hero is, at the beginning of the tale, described as exiled from all, deprived of all, driven forth from pleasant and prosperous places into the wilderness. He sets forth from the wilderness on some kind of pilgrimage ; he meets with all sorts of adventures, enemies, hardships, enigmas, terrors ; and at last at the end of the story, he is restored to all that he has lost, and to far more than all. His wicked enemies have been trodden under his feet, all tears have been wiped from his eyes, all goods have been given back to him, nay, given back tenfold ; his Beloved is his ; and, in the beautiful, old ending, " he lives happily ever after."

That is the Exile, Return, and Vengeance Formula, which makes, according to the Folklorists, one of the age-old stories of the world. There the Folklorists stop ; but we, I think, may be bold to say that, under these figures, is told the story of man, who comes from Paradise and at last returns to Paradise, having conquered all his adversaries and trampled down all the terrors that beset him. For my part, I very willingly receive this tale as a part of the primitive instinct of man, or if you will, a part of the primitive revelation made to man ; and I hold, too, that if this be not accepted, then it follows that all literature and all art are but forms of mania, ravings about rests and palaces and refreshments that have no real existence in the universe. I should be sorry to accept this doctrine ; and so I hold that Nicholas Nickleby is one of the great witnesses to the truth. It is true that in Nicholas Nickleby the word for Paradise is Dawlish, which is a small town

in Devonshire on the Great Western line ; but again, I must maintain that Dawlish, as Dulwich, is no unfit symbol of the place of rest and refreshment and joys that are perdurable. For, you will remark that in the real books you feel that the hero and his friends are come to the place of the undying, to the garths of the immortals. Their sorrows are all over in the earlier chapters of the book ; Squeers is sent overseas, Ralph is dead, Nicholas, with Madeleine, is returned to the old garden, and there he lives to this day, young and happy for evermore. They lived happy ever after.

I have only indicated possibilities. I have shewn that things most manifest have been before all eyes for long ages, and yet have remained concealed, even from the wise. I have spoken of a hot fire on a cold night, of bread and cheese and beer, and the tales of an early Victorian novelist ; all these things being everywhere apparent to all. I leave you to judge of what else is known to all, and yet hidden from all, among the signs of the Kingdom.

IN CONVERTENDO

AT last Ambrose Meyrick caught that famous train from Lupton to Birmingham. He had waited for many years, he had yearned and sickened for the sight of the old land of his fathers, he had not allowed the memory of Gwent to fail ; and now, when the whistle sounded and the train began to move out of the station he was astonished to find himself so little uplifted by the granting of his desires. He looked up with a kind of sober joy at the railway bridge on which the poor little boy had stood so often, for so many hours, straining his eyes towards the West. He remembered that one day, when the earth burned as with fire, and his heart and soul and body were faint almost to death ; he remembered how he had been refreshed by the vision of the mountain, by the wind that breathed new life into him. It was curious, he thought, how, against his own desire and his own faith, he had ceased to take daily account of such a merciful marvel as this, which should have been a perpetual talisman, a constant defence against all weariness and sickness and despair, an hourly reminder that the world was not given up entirely to the powers of darkness. He understood the difficulty of the great Act of Faith, which must be renewed day by day, again and again, by a constant

exercise of the will : or else the abyss, the fall into the black pit of nonsense and despair which most people spoke of as the world, "and not half a bad place either, if you take it the right way." It was so simple, the "not half a bad place" creed ; one fell in with it so easily, without any conscious effort of acquiescence ; one conformed even against one's own steadfast convictions unless these were continually renewed and proclaimed. One knew better, perhaps—one had been vouchsafed sure proofs from within and from without ; and yet it was so entirely natural to believe that man is sustained by loaves from the baker and meat from the butcher, and to take one's measures accordingly. As the train sped away to the West and the South he resolved that this should be amended, that for the future he would daily remind himself that he was fed not by baker's bread and butcher's meat, but by miracles and wonders.

But the past year had been given over to that process of dryness and fear which is called the Purgative Way. It is needful, but it lacks all refreshment and unction, speaking more of unworthiness and darkness than of light and compassions. He feared, indeed, lest he should have bowed down too low in the temple of the false gods of Lupton—though the motive had been good ; but he had tried to listen sympathetically to the Doctor's sermons. And what a course it had been during the last term ! The main point enforced had been that one could not arrange one's life in separate compartments without relation the one to the other, that *all* life was of infinite and equal importance, that the

games and the school work were to be regarded just as seriously as the pursuits and labours of later years.

"Do not let us mistake," said the preacher one Sunday morning; "we are already inhabitants of Eternity. Here, at Lupton, in school and in the playing-fields, in our sports and in our studies, each action is of eternal import, each action forms part of that character which will be our everlasting possession."

And the whole gist of the series was that every boy who wished to be a plausible and successful humbug in after-life had better set about his great task immediately.

"Remember," said the Doctor, "we are not in the Dark Ages now. None among us will ever be called upon to be the minister of a capricious and arbitrary sovereign. There is no one here whose gift of statesmanship will be exercised in concocting measures against the liberties of the people; there is no one whose military ability will be utilised in deeds of savage and remorseless oppression. We are not in the Dark Ages. There may be future prelates in your ranks for all I know; but the Bishop of to-day is successor in name only to the mediæval hierophant.

"No. We are to serve a sovereign who wears no visible crown. . . . Remember once and for all that popularity, in its true sense, is a noble aim—nay, it is the noblest of all aims. What wonder that the Jewish populace cried 'Hosanna'! He had compassion on the *multitude*. The common people heard Him gladly. . . . Let us all beware; we are not to work for cliques, for small and select

exercise of the will : or else the abyss, the fall into the black pit of nonsense and despair which most people spoke of as the world, "and not half a bad place either, if you take it the right way." It was so simple, the "not half a bad place" creed ; one fell in with it so easily, without any conscious effort of acquiescence ; one conformed even against one's own steadfast convictions unless these were continually renewed and proclaimed. One knew better, perhaps—one had been vouchsafed sure proofs from within and from without ; and yet it was so entirely natural to believe that man is sustained by loaves from the baker and meat from the butcher, and to take one's measures accordingly. As the train sped away to the West and the South he resolved that this should be amended, that for the future he would daily remind himself that he was fed not by baker's bread and butcher's meat, but by miracles and wonders.

But the past year had been given over to that process of dryness and fear which is called the Purgative Way. It is needful, but it lacks all refreshment and unction, speaking more of unworthiness and darkness than of light and compassions. He feared, indeed, lest he should have bowed down too low in the temple of the false gods of Lupton—though the motive had been good ; but he had tried to listen sympathetically to the Doctor's sermons. And what a course it had been during the last term ! The main point enforced had been that one could not arrange one's life in separate compartments without relation the one to the other, that *all* life was of infinite and equal importance, that the

games and the school work were to be regarded just as seriously as the pursuits and labours of later years.

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aristocratic bodies, however exquisite their tastes, however high their standards ; we are to work for, to speak to, the 'multitude'—the 'common people' ; we are to win popularity."

Ambrose shuddered and laughed at the recollection of this discourse and of others like it—it was clear that he had had enough of such follies ; it was time for him to leave behind Lupton and all its ways. Already it seemed to belong to things departed. He would return for a little while at the end of the holidays and go through such formalities as were necessary, but Lupton was over—its foolish routine, its magazines of cant, its dull pedantries, its sense of being at the centre of all things ; it was all past and performed, and lay in his mind like the recollection of a tedious and unimportant play that one has witnessed and would willingly forget. Behind him all this weariness, its dolours and its languors, its pains and longings ; before him was the Land of Desire, the end, and the goal, and the Perfection.

When the train reached Hereford, Lupton had vanished from his mind and all recollection of it. He had been exiled and he was returning, and when the great hills rose up before him a strange emotion beat within his breast. He did not know the precise boundary of the counties, but at the sign of the hills he took off his hat, worshipping the dear soil of Gwent ; the land had an unutterable word for him, and all his being made answer. The whole earth kept that day a great festival ; he could almost have said : *Montes exultaverunt ut arietes ; et colles sicut agni ovium.* It was a day of soft sunshine behind a delicate veil ; the land was all in a golden,

wonderful radiance, and the clear streams glittered in the light, and the leaves of the trees danced with exultation in a wind blowing from the west. He looked out of the carriage window with a gaze of such ardour and delight as lovers know. *Qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum : et rupem in fontes aquarum.*

His sojourn in the dry and stony land was ended ; there rushed the translucent brook down from the mountain-side, from the very heart of the rock ; he fancied that he could hear the sound of the pouring waters and their voice of gladness. There was the glen that led to the wild country ; the land of green, bubbling wells, and the far purple fields of heather, and the world of golden, scented gorse, where the great rocks looked like magic Druid rings. He and his father had climbed by that little path—so many years ago—to see a church of very old religion and the well of an old saint.

The brook rushed on ; the line ran parallel with it for some miles. He feasted his eyes on that wonderful clear stream ; he had seen no such sight since the day on which he had left Gwent, for about Lupton most of the rivers and brooks were poisonous sewers, and even the unpolluted waters were dull and muddy and sluggish as they crawled through dull fields. Here was quick crystal, which sang *Lætare* as it poured from the hill into the valley ; its pools were a shining darkness ; its ripples were of silver light—it was pure as the dawn upon the mountains ; it was as if the great alchemy of God had transmuted the hard, innermost rocks with all their secrets into that rejoicing brightness.

On his left hand now rose the Hill of the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel—a strange, riven height, venerated by the people before the coming of the "Black Hag of Geneva, who sends body and soul quick to hell." Here, they said, in the old days those who knew would sometimes go apart, climbing the red height till they came to the Chapel of the Archangel, a very small and ancient place, of which the foundations still remained, standing in a thick wood of ash trees. This observance, it has been said, furnishes the explanation of the curious poem by Morvran called "The Sovereignty of the Ash." Ambrose, as he gazed up towards the mountain, could see the wood, the boughs of the ash-trees tossing in the wind, and he remembered the poem, a strange piece of metrical ingenuity in the original, which had served as a model to many generations of bards, though none had ever equalled it in the complexity of its structure. In its lines Morvran had mingled alliteration and rhyme and assonance in a wonderful manner, and, as the poets said, besides all this there were "inspiration and unction" of such a singular magic that it was sometimes spoken of as "The Supreme Incantation of Morvran." The poem represents all the trees as contending for the honour of sovereignty :

As the first hues of the dawn above the forest of Caerrhiu,
There appeared a red blossom out of the shadow of the trees.
The Rose spoke : it was like the clear chant of the angels—

Though I am least of the trees of the wood,
Though I am hidden and overshadowed in the wood,
Though I dwell often in obscurity,
Yet I claim principality in this assemblage :
Because I am a native of the Old Garden,
Because I typify the accomplishment of the Saints,
Because in my blossom is hidden the Great Mystery,
Because I waft abroad sweet odours of Paradise,
Ancient relics of the lost kingdom.

The Hazel boasts that its boughs are the "quire of the birds of God," the Wych-elm of its potency in magic, the Oak has borne sway from all ages, the White Thorn is the "shining house of Merlin," the Yew has "an honourable station near the altars of the saints" ; and so the poem ranges through all the trees of the wood, till the Ash triumphs :

Because I keep watch over the shrine of the Chief
Angel,
Because beneath my boughs shone the Majesty of
Heaven,
Because I was a veil to the Glorious Appearance,
Because I was visited by Heaven's high warrior :
Mihangel is my advocate, the bearer of the Offering
Unto the supreme altar of the Most High.

Ambrose was murmuring these last lines to himself as the train passed the base of the Mount of Apparition, and the man who had got in at Hereford glanced round nervously and looked at the cord of communication. Ambrose saw the glance and, understanding it, was amused to think that if he had

told the man in the corner a filthy story he would have been thought a very pleasant companion.

But he looked longingly at the boughs of the ash tossing in the wind on the far mountain-side, thinking of the stories told of those who retired to this shrine in "the Dark Ages." Before what was called "the flaming picture of the Chief Angel" these vowed persons would remain three whole days and nights in silent devotion, rapt, so the legends said, far out of the earthly regions and raised to the heavenly places, "to the state of Paradise," so that when they came down again to the valleys and lower places of the world they were as those who had voyaged to the Blessed Isles, since their garments were scented with celestial odours, and about them was the visible shining of light.

The train rushed on through the rich and happy meadows, by the wild thickets, by the shimmering fields of corn, by the old white farms; before his eyes now rose that well-remembered and venerable Mynydd Mawr; high upon it he could see the line of straggling beeches, and the walls of Cradock's house gleaming in the sunlight. His heart thrilled at the thought of that which rested there concealed in a dark place—of the Holy Cup in its glistering veils of samite; it was as yesterday that he bent before those ghostly splendours, and saw the images of immortal things that showed in the crystal mirror of the Blessed Work. The Golden Wood, resounding with the magic summons of the bells, the far-lifted sanctuary of Corarbennic high above the ninth wave, the vision of the saints of Britain sailing on the Faery Sea to Avalon. He could scarce see

the great dome of the mountain above him, scarce rejoice in the deep woods below, scarce fix his eyes on the white walls by the beeches, for the recollection of the clearer marvels that had appeared before him. He felt as though a voice cried to him from that place; the Cup seemed to summon him to kneel once more and to behold new visions.

Cradock's house passed out of sight, and there surged up the great wall of Mynydd Maen, and far down to the south Twyn Barlwm, the lofty height that looks far over land and sea, where the wind is like strong wine. He sank back in the seat, and wondered how he could have borne that long and weary exile. *Facti sumus sicut consolati. Venientes autem venient cum exultatione: portantes manipulos suos.*

And he wondered still more deeply by what compassions he had been preserved in that house of folly which he had inhabited, which he had entered, helpless and defenceless, a little lonely child. How was it that he had not been ruined utterly, that he had not become a "practical" man, longing for the time when he should be able to do some great work in the world—say, by sitting in the House of Commons? There were lads of his own age who were already bubbling over with enthusiasm in the cause of Humanity, who were already beginning to count the rewards that really earnest, disinterested work for one's fellow men seldom fails to procure; they pointed to young Haslee, an old Luptonian, who had changed sides twice, and was certain to be in the next Cabinet of his party, though he was barely thirty. Many of the boys, taking the

Doctor's solemn warnings to heart, had already made friends who would be useful in later life—useful, that is, in forwarding them in their desire to Do some Good in the World. Ah ! how had he escaped from this cesspool, from the teaching of the masters and the companionship of the boys, without losing his soul for ever ?

THE MARTYR

ALL progressive and advanced thinkers must have heard with great regret of the death of Charles Hexton, for so many years editor and director of the *Materialist*. Hexton was not an old man, and up to a week or two of the end his friends had always spoken of him as the incarnation of health and vigour and energy ; they were horrified at the sudden change which took place in a few days ; at the terrible emaciation which seemed to transform the " Hearty Hexton " of his Old Street associates into a feeble and tottering invalid. It became known at last that he was unable to take any nourishment, and it was felt that under such circumstances there could be but little hope. He was delirious for some hours before his death, and his niece says that denunciation of clericalism and superstition were oddly mixed with broken phrases about roast beef, potatoes, and bottled beer.

The fact is that Hexton died a martyr to the consistency of his principles. He was always thorough, he never shrank from carrying out his premises to their logical conclusions, however ridiculous the results might seem to minds out of sympathy with his aim ; and the last weeks of his life were a crowning testimony to the great cause of

which he was a devoted leader. It may be worth while to tell the story of the end of a great career.

Hexton, of course, had parted from superstition at an early age. Mrs. Besant has told us how her infant's severe stomach-ache demonstrated to her the falsity and absurdity of Christian dogma ; and in the same way Hexton, finding that he suffered some gastric inconvenience from eating a box of cough lozenges, became a Freethinker at the age of ten. "I was logical even then," he said afterwards, "and I saw that the theory of a benevolent direction of the Universe was quite inconsistent with the bilious attack from which I suffered. From that moment I laboured to release my fellow creatures from the bondage of a cruel and degrading superstition." He became, indeed, a redoubtable enemy of clericalism in all its forms ; he was a power in the press and on the platform, and obscurantists and reactionaries of all shades dreaded his undoubted influence.

It was some six or seven weeks before his death that he set about a task which had long been in his mind—the writing of a brief pamphlet which should show at a glance the absurdity of all superstitious beliefs and practices, and at the same time furnish a test or criterion by which the presence of superstition should be infallibly detected. He meant to run over the usual topics ; but in the first place he wished to demonstrate the palpable futility of the arguments on the other side. These were the appeal to antiquity, to universal consent and usage, to great names, to instinct, and so forth ; and then he was to show how utterly irrational all

superstition was, how there was usually no connection between the supposed cause and the supposed effect. Next, he would point out that if the "outworks" of any system were absurd, it was highly probable that the "citadel," or central position, was absurd also; and further, he would note how superstitious notions and habits flourished chiefly among ignorant, backward races, among children, and among the men of the Middle Ages who were childish in all their ideas. He must show also that we were bound to reject any system, any action which did not lead to a distinct material good.

"For [he jotted down among his notes] even the Bishops would not deny that we are material and live in a material Universe. This being so, anything which conflicts with these conditions, must be profoundly absurd and (in the true sense) immoral. It is evident then that a creed which leads to a man being burned alive must be a very bad and a very foolish creed. Martyrdom is the true blasphemy."

Hexton had reached this point in the rough sketch of his treatise, when a sudden thought shot through his brain "like a lightning flash." He was as a man stunned; he could not move or speak; he was overwhelmed with the discovery that he had made. When he was able to reflect calmly he knew that a most astounding truth had been revealed to him. He never wrote the intended pamphlet; but the manuscript of his last work—"Deipnomoria, or the Folly of Dining"—is before me.

It shows in the first place that it is monstrous to

defend the habit of eating and drinking because "everybody did it." At one time "everybody" heard Mass. Equally idle was it to quote the names of great men in praise of food and drink; great men had approved the most hideous habits, and the most preposterous beliefs. It was not necessary to oppose the pretence that persons received any benefit from the insane orgy they called dinner. Other persons were ready to protest that they had received benefit from bathing in "Holy Wells," from kissing the mouldering bones of a dead man, from uttering irrational formulæ called prayers.

As for the plea of antiquity, Hexton expressed his surprise that such a plea could be put forward for a moment. This was the plea that had been advanced in favour of every abuse, of every folly, of every monstrosity of thought or practice of which the human race had been guilty—the fact of this defence being made was in itself *à priori* evidence that the case was past defending. Men had been eating and drinking for countless ages? Certainly; and they had been committing many other disgusting, irrational, criminal, useless and offensive actions for countless ages. The very antiquity of beef and beer, walnuts and water, was a strong presumption against them. Astrology was one of the oldest beliefs in the world, and its antiquity was a sure argument of its absurdity.

Then, some people would say that they felt they must have something to eat and drink. A Chinaman would tell the same tale about his opium-pipe, a dipsomaniac of the brandy-bottle, an habitual smoker of his tobacco. Each of these deluded and

degraded persons would protest that he could not live without his stimulant or his narcotic, and would, very likely, suffer severely enough if it were denied him, the vicious craving induced by indulgence co-operating with the imagination, so that a very real state of misery might result from deprivation. But were we to call opium, brandy, tobacco, necessaries of life ? Of course, if the drug maniac or the drunkard were guarded and the drug withheld he would generally, in process of time, be cured of his longing, and it was only reasonable to suppose that such would be the experience of the food-and-drink maniac. In some cases the victim of drugs or alcohol turned out to be incurable ; even then we did not consider that death in *delirium tremens* proved that brandy is a necessary of life.

Then, one had to consider the supreme irrationality of the actions of eating and drinking. People said that they experienced certain sensations, which they called by the arbitrary and conventional names of " hunger " and " thirst." They could give no clear account of these sensations, doubtless because they were entirely imaginary, the results of auto-suggestion. [Note the exact similarity between the cases of the food maniac and the religious maniac.] If you cross-examined one of the sufferers from that acute form of food-mania known as starvation, you would probably be astonished at the vagueness of the man's replies. He would, probably, be totally unable to give any account whatever of his supposed symptoms ; you might get " a sort of sinking feeling," or " a sort of gnawing feeling," or " a sort of all-overish feeling,"

or some such unintelligible gibberish, coupled, very likely, with an unmeaning gesture in the direction of the abdomen. If the mania were far advanced the patient might even be delirious ; in any case, the average hysterical sufferer would be able to describe her supposed symptoms with infinitely greater clearness. Yet no one imagines that the hysterical sensations or disabilities have any existence out of the diseased brain of the sufferer. The strength of the hunger-illusion was conceded ; it was not so great, however, as the strength of the hysteria-illusion. "The starving man thinks he wants food ; the hysterical woman thinks she has paralysis ; the one delusion is as reasonable as the other."

"But let us suppose [Hexton writes] that out of mistaken kindness you are so thoughtless as to gratify the horrible and ridiculous longings of the hunger-maniac. You give him, let us say, a steak, that is a portion of ox-flesh, partially burned at a fire. He divides this object into portions, conveys these to his mouth, and lets them slip down his throat. He will then tell you that his craving is appeased, that he 'feels better' ; a look of contentment may come into his face, not at all unlike the expression of stupid beatitude which may be seen on the faces of the drug-maniac and devotee when *their* cravings have been satisfied. Now appeal to the patient and ask him as a reasonable man to tell you how the swallowing of ox-flesh, partially burned, can lead to content or happiness. He will not tell you, he cannot ; nor can anyone else. It is true that medical men, who have their formulas,

just as priests have their creeds, have written many unintelligible volumes concerning nutrition, assimilation, gastric juice, peptones, proteids [note the resemblance between the jargon of medicine and the jargon of theology !] but it is not, we may presume, seriously contended that the average starving man has read these volumes, and has been convinced by their arguments, that he has mastered in all its detail, the intricate and wonderful and supernatural process [cf. the theological 'mystery'] by which somehow or other, the burned flesh of the ox is converted and 'transubstantiated' into content, and happiness, and high thoughts of joy. It is certain that the sufferer from 'starvation' has done nothing of the kind, that he is no more able to demonstrate the irrational action he has performed than a poor Catholic is able to demonstrate the Sacrifice of the Mass. The 'starving' man who chews beef, the 'devout' man who goes to mass are, in plain language, persons who perform actions for which they are unable to give the semblance of a reasonable account. They are in the same class as lunatics, drunkards, and morphomaniacs.

"Probably it would not be difficult to trace this extraordinary delusion to its origin. At some very early and barbarous period in human history, eating and drinking were probably invented as a kind of initiatory rite ; it was supposed that he who received the flesh of the ox into his body partook mystically of the ox's strength and powers of endurance. Different animals were added to obtain different qualities ; the whole process being, no doubt, a curious ritual, which it might not be impossible to

reconstruct. The ancient Mexicans had an odd yearly festival, during which they went into the woods and devoured reptiles, and modern savages believe that to eat of the heart of the lion gives courage. The theory long pervaded medicine, and is, perhaps, not quite extinct in the medicine of the present day."

Hexton had an easy task when he came to consider the "outworks" of eating and drinking.

"No man [he protests] can maintain that mustard and horse-radish are necessary to life, no one can possibly believe that dishes are rendered more wholesome or more nourishing by the addition of elaborate sauces and condiments. Bedlam alone could advance the proposition that a jelly sustains and fortifies any the more by being made in an extravagant shape, and coloured with some bright pigment. If food were really a necessary, as is pretended, probably five minutes would suffice for its consumption: it would be prepared in some soluble form, and would be swallowed by the bedside, the first thing in the morning, and the last thing at night. It would certainly not be served to people in a silly costume by ministrants dressed in a sillier; it would not be disguised in all imaginable forms and colours, concealed by strange flavourings, on a board richly draped, decorated like an altar with lights and flowers; while, in some cases, music is played on a band of instruments. [Note: how all these circumstances fit in with a savage rite of initiation.] Thus: the accidents of the food and

drink mania being frankly lunatic, we may safely conclude that the habit is irrational in its essence."

He demonstrated the fact that the practice of dining appealed to children and backward races: that young people, savages, and the Middle Ages, were all gluttonous, obsessed by the thought of the banquet. As for material advantage, a frightful food scandal was even then the chief topic of the papers, and pages on pages dealt with the poisonous adulteration of food and drink, with the dangers that lurk in the very purest products, with the estimated mortality due to the use of milk—a more dangerous beverage than brandy or strong beer. Water, of course, had slain whole armies, had spread plague and pestilence over continents. It would be difficult to say whether opium and its preparations or tea and coffee worked the greatest harm to men. The vegetarians had shown conclusively enough that the carnivorous habit was a fatal and horrible vice; and it was not possible to deny that the vegetarian races had surpassed the carnivorous in the record of inhuman crime. The rice-eating Indian was at once feeble physically and diabolically cruel and treacherous. It was clear that the platter and the cup were responsible for more disease, misery, and death than all the plagues of the Dark Ages; they were, perhaps, more fatal to humanity than the Christian Church itself.

The last lines are written in a staggering and uneven script. Charles Hexton died, as he had

lived, a progressive and liberal thinker. When once the truth was clear to him, neither food nor drink passed his lips ; as he said : " I might as well say my prayers as dine ; the one process is no more illogical than the other." He was, indeed, a martyr to principle.

EDUCATION AND THE UNEDUCATED

IT is hardly possible to read the newspaper for many weeks in succession without being confronted by some delightful remarks about the older universities and their system. Perhaps some idiot parent writes to express his conviction that Latin and Greek are of but little use in the City ; possibly some young budding virgin of the press, who is acquiring the first principles of the Gospel according to Peter Keary, warns Oxford and Cambridge that unless they set their archaic houses in order and grant degrees and honours in Business (otherwise common swindling) they must go. Or, possibly, the field may be changed, and some Hermit of Mount Carmel may startle hundreds of thousands of readers with the discovery that the curriculum of the County Council Schools does not make a lad a good plumber or an expert carpenter. In each case the concealed premiss (which is taken for granted) is the same ; and, roughly stated, it is to the effect that education is that process which enables a man to get on in life. This, of course, is nonsense and confusion. Education is a mental and spiritual training ; it has no relation of any sort to the matter of technical instruction, whatever the technique to be acquired may be. A

man may be a perfect plumber and be uneducated, another man may be a supreme violinist and be uneducated, a third man may manage a bank with the most exquisite skill and the most delightful grace and yet be wholly uneducated. Let it be understood, then, once for all, that apprenticeship to a craft has nothing whatever to do with the process by which a man is enabled to realise his own true self, to become what he was intended to become in the interior sphere of things. Oxford may be or may not be a home of true education ; but the fact—if it be a fact—that Oxford does not fit a man for a Stock Exchange career must be set aside at the beginning of any inquiry as to its educational merits as wholly impertinent. On the other hand, the " Board School " education may or may not be bad and mischievous ; but, at any rate, it is not the business of the Board School to teach the Art of Scavenging, and any allegations to that effect are *nihil ad rem.*

Then, there is another point. Owing to a very unimportant discovery, now dating back to some four and a half centuries, we have got strangely confused ideas as to the instruments and subject-matter of real education. This discovery of the art of multiplying copies of a book at a cheap rate by the use of movable types has somehow given birth to the crazy notion that a man who can read books is educated, while a man who cannot read books is uneducated. Anyone who likes to take the trouble of thinking will see that this proposition is quite ludicrously false. If it were not false, then the " illiterate " Greeks who listened to the bard

reciting the Odyssey, the Jews who heard the prophecy of Isaiah, the country folk who knew a whole library of goodly and noble ballads were all uneducated ; while young Guppy in the train with his sheets of "yellow" intelligence, his sheaves of *Snippets*, is educated ; and young De Vere, pale with his study of the *Guide to the Turf*, is also educated. This is so clearly a ridiculously and intolerable proposition that one wonders how it can ever have been advanced, and yet it is of some antiquity. The venerable and pompous band of Scholar Boobies who made much of Burns at Edinburgh, and helped to ruin him for life, were, clearly, under the impression that *they* were educated and that the poet was uneducated. This was the marvel to them : here was a man who could "make" very well indeed, there was no denying it ; and yet he had no degrees or honours from any university whatever, knew no Greek, no Latin, and only the most elementary French—just enough to sign himself *Ruisseaux*. In fact, Burns had read very few books in any language whatever : *therefore*, said the Boobies aforesaid, he is an uneducated man. Hence their wonder, as at some strange prodigy and sport of Nature ; they stared at poor Burns as others might have stared at a Learned Pig or Mathematical Magpie. The real fact was that the *Literati* of Edinburgh were, for the most part, wholly uneducated, while Burns was a very highly educated man, not on account of his smattering of school instruction, but rather in spite of it. He would have been a greater man still, in all probability, if he had never been taught to read printed books ; it was from

books that he learned that it was proper and "poetic" to call the sun "Phœbus," it was the study of books that set him to writing his weak and stilted imitations of English poetry, it was the study of books and the company of men stupefied with books that caused him to despise the real university that he had attended—a stool at the feet of an old woman who knew the "auld sangs" and the ancient tales, and all the legends of the old, vanished Scotland. There is, then, no necessary connection between "book-learning" and education; many men have been educated in the very highest degree who could not tell B or Beth or Beta from a bull's foot.

Of course, in the days when the great majority of men were really educated, education was not so much in books as in the whole structure of life; it was in the air that they breathed. A man not only went to the theatre and heard the *Œdipus*, not only listened to the story of the Wanderings of Ulysses, not only heard the Fairy History of Herodotus declaimed: he lived in a land undefiled by the devil temples called factories; he saw on every side the gracious dwelling-places of the gods; he joined in his village rituals; he could wear a wreath without feeling that he was making a fool of himself; he saw in all Nature a wonderful operation of unseen and mysterious forces; his eyes could almost see the gleam of the white naiad in the brook; and the oak boughs rustled with the feet of the tree-nymph; in the depths of the wood there lurked Great Pan; there were Powers in the clouds and Powers in the mighty deeps; on the mountain-tops present Deity

was enthroned. Wonders and mysteries were about all his ways; his eyes beheld beauty, and his lips uttered beauty. This was an "educated" man; and till people learn that all these "old fables" tell infinitely more of the real truth of things than their sixpenny manuals of chemistry and biology; nay, that the whole effect of the one is Truth, and that the whole effect of the other is Lies—they will remain uneducated, in spite of their manuals, or rather, because of them. It is not that these little books are technically incorrect—they are probably quite truthful as far as they go, or till next year or so, when their theories, such as they are, will be entirely overturned by some new discovery. They would be quite useful little books if those into whose hands they fell understood that they were merely the fanciful and pleasing dreams of "scientific" men about the appearances and outside skirts of the universe; but unfortunately the statement that gold is an element is taken by most readers as a final and eternal truth—and the result is, naturally enough, great mental confusion, as the readers in question imagine, not that they are in possession of a questionable statement which may be shattered to dust in to-morrow's paper, but that they know all that is to be known about gold. It is as if we were asked for a description of a Turner, and replied by giving a detailed chemical analysis of the various pigments employed by the artist, assuring the inquirer at the same time that he now understood all that there is to understand in this or that masterpiece. So, if we would be educated, we must pitch the sixpenny manuals into the fire (not

into the dustbin, lest the scavengers become corrupted), and summon back the nymph to the brake and the dryad to the oak.

Or there is a still better way, since there was a time in which men had a finer education than any that Greece could afford. So far as the Gothic cathedral is exalted above the Parthenon, so much higher was the standard of education in the Middle Ages than in the days of Pericles. I am not sure whether it is still necessary to bring forward evidence as to this proposition ; one knows what a stupendous and absurd paradox it would have seemed to Macaulay. Macaulay, of course, thought that the age of real education, of true enlightenment, had only just begun in his own time. From his point of view all creation had been groaning for countless centuries under a dark pall of ignorance ; the Greeks were almost as bad as the people in the Middle Ages—neither the one or the other had so much as thought of the steam engine ; all history had been but a sort of groping, a long and weary setting of the scene, till at last the curtain went up on a blaze of light, on the Whig Administration, and on the passing of the first Reform Act. The schoolmaster was, at last, abroad, as Macaulay's fellow-lunatic observed, and real history was just going to begin. Alas ! we have "stepped up" since then, in response to the blatant showman's invitation, and we have found the show by no means answerable to the pictures painted outside. I think it is now hardly necessary to argue *this* point ; I think it is fairly well agreed that the man who calls the period *c.* 1200–*c.* 1450 the "Dark

Ages" is an ignorant ass. One may say that during this time man approached very nearly to the state to which he has been called ; that in the chief work of that day—the cathedral—he realised most perfectly the image of the world : a vast place of splendours and glories, of heights and of depths, of descents and aspirations, of shining light and abodes of darkness, of ringing bells and chanting choirs, of glowing martyrs in dyed vestments, of strange and hideous grotesques ; and all designed for worship. Those who made these places were educated, those who bowed down in them were educated ; and so great a spirit moved then on the waters of the world that not only the altars of the Most High, but the commonest things of common life showed some gleam from the Inmost Shrine. The barns, the hovels, the bowls and platters, the pot that hung over the farmhouse fire, the very nails that studded the doors—all the things that this age made are now objects on which we barbarians look with longing ; and if we have money we pay artists and skilled artisans to imitate for us, as well as they can, the work of the mediæval blacksmith and carpenter. If we could have a little village church, just as it was before the " schoolmasters " of the Reformation began to be abroad, the wealth of an American millionaire could hardly purchase it ; it would actually be a commercial asset of enormous value. It seems to me unlikely that any future age, however dark may be the period of besotted and blatant ignorance that is before us, will wish to spend countless millions on the acquisition of Dr. Clifford's Meeting House. These men, then, I

think we may call educated; these makers of beauty, these dwellers amongst sculptured loveliness, these men who made the images of the Eternal Glory. Even business men might pause and reflect, for it seems that in the long run it pays not to be a Brute, that there is actually money in being a man, instead of being a wretched slave-driver and stink-finger and erector of "free" churches which blaspheme the sun and the sky and the flowers and the light of day in their stones as in their doctrine.

It would be, perhaps, too much to say that education in any real sense is utterly impossible at the present day. We can see from what has been said that it must be a work of enormous difficulty; for any true teaching that can be given from books or from word of mouth is straightway contradicted and annulled by the whole atmosphere and circumstances of modern life. How can we truly learn beauty if our days are passed for the most part in a horrible orgy of hideousness and corruption? How can we expect a factory hand to realise the beauty, the wonder, the mystery of anything whatever when his whole life is passed in some soul- and mind- and body-destroying occupation; when his daily work is hardly more intelligent than that of the cogs and endless bands and poison vats which he has to supervise—and his only holiday is made up of a nightmare called "t'coop," washed down with much adulterated beer? A man who lives such a life can see nothing and understand nothing; he has, not by his own fault, but by the fault of his masters and spiritual teachers, fallen again from Paradise; and,

so far as one can see, his one idea of happiness is to turn out his master and become master himself—which is about as foolish and futile as if one proposed to regenerate America by seeing that every adult citizen became a millionaire. One discovers but little hope for such men as these ; and the so-called education that is given them is probably but the adding of fuel to the flames of their burning—it is a giving of a picture gallery to a blind man. It has been shown again and again that the result of more than fifty years' compulsory "education" had been the creation of a race of ferocious and degraded brutes called Hooligans. Why should we expect any other result ? We should not dream, I hope, of insisting on a typhoid patient eating a hearty meal of roast beef, greens, Yorkshire pudding, and potatoes, with apple tart and Stilton cheese to follow ; the whole washed down by a pint or so of strong ale. We have done a more deadly deed than that, however ; and perhaps some of us may live to see the result of our ignorant and malignant folly.

So much for the education of the people who work with their hands, of the poor—worse still is the case of the rich. The poor have many ills to endure ; but they have nothing quite so bad as the Great English Public School System. The County Council claims only so many hours of their lives every day ; it does not shut them up for months at a time in accursed barracks, and indoctrinate them with a poison called "the tone," or "the ethos." Poor boys who are sensible make haste to forget the farrago of useless information that they have been

compelled to acquire, and devote themselves to their craft, whatever it may be, with such relaxations as street-gambling for halfpence and an interest in "all the winners" to make life endurable. One hopes that there are very few children of the County Council who in after life remember anything whatever as to the height of Mont Blanc, the course of the Dnieper, the date of the invention of gunpowder, or the difference between a calyx and a stamen. But the public school boy does not escape so easily. It is not that he is burdened with learning, useful or useless; he does not worry his friends by repeating Greek choruses in a rapt undertone between the courses at dinner; he does not speak the French tongue with such second nature that his replies to casual remarks are often couched in that language; his knowledge of English literature would be counted in championship points as —100; his perceptions of art are about as keen as those of a hippopotamus, and his acquirements in theology would expose him to the derision of the eight years old child of a Spanish farm labourer. Let us do justice to the system; the public school boy's master has brought the art of not teaching anything in particular and of doing everything in the wrong way to such an exquisite pitch that very few boys leave their school with any ideas worth speaking of on any subject whatever. Everything in this way has been done that mortal wit can compass. Not only has the lad been taught the classics in such a sort that he comes quite early to regard Latin and Greek as mere pits of destruction from which horrible and tortuous puzzles of grammatical con-

struction are exploded by the master ; not only is he curiously and thoroughly purged of the idea that Greeks and Romans were human beings who wrote (sometimes) wonderful and splendid literature ; not only is he instructed in French to such purpose that he can neither speak it, understand it, or write it. All this is great, but it is not enough. The beautiful things in English literature are seized on by " the dear old Head " ; brave, roaring plays of Shakespeare, such as *Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—things full of life and action and clanging swords and wine and tavern gaiety and the supreme blackguardism of Falstaff and his followers—all this the schoolboy receives in a little book encrusted with the laborious filth and rubbish of many notes. At every line the wretched lad finds his interest annihilated by some horrible command to " cf." something with something else not a bit like it ; with those noble Agincourt speeches, celebrating the memory of Crispin Crispinian comes a hideous drench of Franco-English history ; Pistol cannot pour out his wonderful rodomontados without the miserable annotator speculating as to where and when he picked up his vocabulary, and the boy is lucky if the fooleries of Dr. Caius do not lead to a lengthy and futile dissertation on the founder of Gonville and Caius. It is done and done thoroughly ; the pupil acquits himself brilliantly in that Chinese Lunacy called " the Examination," and firmly resolves never to open a Shakespeare for the rest of his days. All this is granted ; nothing is omitted which may convince the boy that all learning is a disagreeable

folly, and that literature is one of the most tiresome of the many forms of "rot." In ten years' time the average public school man has shed all the useless catalogue of facts and dates and notes that he has been forced to stuff into his brain.

But, unfortunately, there is much else that he cannot shed. It is easy enough to forget the date of Agincourt and the rules relative to the optative and the *oratio obliqua*. It is not so easy—it is very difficult, indeed—to eliminate the poisonous stream of cant, humbug, lies, and devil-worship which is injected day after day into the wretched inmates of these public schools. The infernal cultus of success and money, of "getting on," of "making good friends," the entire and absolute absence of anything remotely resembling real religion, the positive presence of the grossest materialism, of the vulgarest ideals: these things stay. It is bad enough that two hundred and fifty pounds may be spent yearly for eight or nine years in the manufacture of the Uninstructed Booby; it is much worse that the system, not content with this mainly negative result, imparts grace to the boys, enabling them to become Offensive Bounders, persons from whom all the generous, noble, and compassionate impulses which become *generosi* are entirely missing. It was not always so: sixty or seventy years ago an "Italian image man" was mobbed by the Rugby boys, and his wares set up for Aunt Sallies and smashed. There was trouble; and a Mr. Hughes, an old Tory squire in Berkshire, wrote in high wrath to his son at the school, pointing out that he who despised and outraged the poor, despised and

outraged God's ordinance in making them so ; and also, that it was a gentleman's chiefest privilege to protect and succour the poor. Mr. Hughes was evidently a thinker of an obsolete type. It is not very long since a band of strolling players—men and women—were hounded and insulted through the High Street of Harrow by the young disciples of " the tone," " the ethos," and " the system."

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